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FIFTEEN
SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

Eight of which were never before printed.

To which is added

A SCRIPTURE CATECHISM:

OR, THE

Principles of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION
laid down in the Words of the Bible.

By the late Reverend and Learned Mr. JAMES
PEIRCE of Exon.

K

L O N D O N:

Printed for John Clark *and* Richard Hett,
James *and* John Knapton, John Noone,
and John Gray.

M. DCC. XXVIII.

FIFTY

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS

By the Rev. Mr. James

of the City of London

A SERMON: CATECHISM:



Principles of Christian Religion
laid down in the Words of the Bible

By the Rev. and Learned Mr. James
Barrow of London

LONDON

Printed for John Clark and Richard Taylor
James and John Kinaston, John Innes
and John Gray.

MDCCLXXIII

THE P R E F A C E.

WHEN Mr. Peirce's Paraphrase on the Hebrews was published, the reader was acquainted, that, besides that performance, he had left behind him some Dissertations on particular passages of scripture, and an Essay on a very uncommon subject. The Dissertations on six texts of scripture soon followed the Paraphrase: And it is now about a month since the Essay, in favour of the ancient practice of giving the eucharist to children, was published.

The reader was farther incouraged to expect a few of Mr. Peirce's sermons, which are now put into his hands: The first seven of them were printed in the author's life time; and when he published them, he did, either in the sermons themselves, or in the prefaces which the reader will find to them, give an account, as far as he judg'd necessary, of the reasons which induced him to preach and print them. The eight that follow are now first published. It is not pretended, that these were revised by the author, as they would have been if he had designed them for the press. But having been (upon other accounts) left in long-hand, they could not with decency be denied to the importunity of his friends, who earnestly desired their publication.

To these it has been judged not improper to sub-join a Scripture Catechism, drawn up, and pub-

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lished by himself some years before his death, though he did not think fit to put his name to it ; apprehending, I suppose, that his name would not procure it a more kind or general reception.

*These being the last of Mr. Peirce's papers which are likely to see the light, it may perhaps be expected that they should be accompanied with some Memoirs of the life of this great and good man. But I must be excused from undertaking any thing of that kind : And in this case there is the less need of it ; because a particular account of his parentage, education, places of abode, acquaintance, studies, &c. was perfectly extorted from him while living. Memoirs, lives, and narratives of that kind are generally filled with circumstantial relations of such weighty particulars as these: and Mr. Peirce thought, as I do, that the world is very little concerned in the private circumstances of any man's life. But, against his settled judgment and inclination, he was constrain'd to trouble the publick with stories of so little importance, in his own necessary defence and vindication, from as groundless a calumny as ever party zeal invented and endeavour'd to propagate *.*

His undeserved sufferings in the last years of his life, from the unprovoked fury and malice of his avowed enemies and bigoted neighbours, as well as the great uneasiness he felt from the unexpected shyness and distant carriage of his cold and timorous friends, need not, and indeed hardly can, be made more publickly known, than they are already.

But there is one thing that has fallen out since his death, which, I think, deserves and calls for a publick notice in this place.

Mr.

* Postscript to Mr. Peirce's Remarks upon the Account of what was transacted in the assembly at Exon, pag. 41.

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Mr. Peirce was buried in the church-yard belonging to the parish in which he died, viz. St. Leonard's near Exon. His surviving relations, in testimony of their affectionate and dutiful regard, were willing to lay a stone over him; and applied to a friend in London for a proper inscription. The following one in Latin was put into their hands; and they contracted with a proper workman, who undertook, and accordingly began, to cut it in the stone. No one concerned in the affair had any notion that it was necessary to ask leave of the reverend minister of the parish to place such a stone over the grave; though the person who was imployed by the relations had erected two tombs with inscriptions in the same church-yard. However, when the work was near finish'd, the reverend rector gave them to know, that he had a right to inquire into, and a power to forbid any inscriptions of this kind, if he did not approve of them. And he was so dissatisfied with the inscription designed and prepared for Mr. Peirce's tomb, when he had seen and perus'd it, that he would by no means be persuaded to permit its being placed in his church-yard.

That the reader may be able to judge of the nature and reasonableness of the reverend Mr. Gey's objections against it, here follows the epitaph as it was first drawn up in Latin; and for the sake of the English reader, there is set in the opposite page a translation of it, as close and exact as the idiom of the two languages would well admit of.

H. S. E
IACOBVS PEIRCIVS
CLARI NÖMINIS THEOLOGVS
QVI INGENIO PERSPICACI LIMATOQVE IVDICIO
TANTAM ERVDITIONEM FELICITER CONIUNXIT
VT VTRVM EXIMHS NATVRAE DOTIEVS
AN INDVSTRIAE ORNAMENTIS MAGIS CONSPICVVS ESSET
IN DVBIO RELIQVISSE VIDEATVR
IYVENIS STYDIORVM CAUSA VLTRAIECTVM SE CONTVLIT
VNDE POST QVINQVENNIYM DOMVM REVERSVS
INDEFESSO LAEORE ATQVE DILIGENTIA
OMNI FERE LITERARVM GENERE MENTEM IMPLEVIT
QVO AD THEOLOGIAE COGNITIONEM SVESIDII ALIQVID
SIBI COMPARARE POSSET
TANTA IGITVR OPTIMARVM ARTIVM SCIENTIA INSTRVCTVS
CVNCTAS SACRI MVNERIS PARTES FIDELISSIME PRAESTITIT
TAM ACCVRATIS CONCIONIEVS QVAM SCRIPTIS ERVDITIS
PLVRIMVM CELEBRATVS
VERITATIS AVTEM EXQVIRENDAE SEMPER STYDIOSISSIMVS
CVM IN NONNVLLIS TANDEM ACCIDIT VT SENTENTIAM MVTARET
PARI PRVDENTIA ET INTEGRITATE SE GESSIT
NAM VT ALIOS EA CELARE SEDVLO CVRAVIT
DVM ILLORVM INTERESSE VT SCIRENT HAVD CREDIDIT
SIC CVM PRIMVM VVLGARE NECESSARIYM IVDICAVIT
NVLLO SVO COMMODO AVT INCOMMODO ADDVCI POTVIT
QVO MINVS PVBLICE PROFITERETVR
HINC IN QVORVNDAM OFFENSIONEM FORTE INCIDENS
QVIBVSCVM ANTEA CONCORDITER VIXERAT
CVM RELIQVAM VITAE PARTEM IAM MAGIS PRIVATAM
SIBI VERO HAVD MINVS LABORIOSAM
NEQVE ALIIS MINVS VTILEM TRANSIGERE STATVERAT
SACRIS LITERIS EXPLICANDIS SE PRAECIPVE ADDIXIT
CVI PRAECLARO OPERI CVM QVATVOR ANNOS IMPENDERAT
PARTIBVS QVIBVSDAM EDITIS QVAE INGENII
ET DOCTRINAE PERPETVA ERVNT MONVMENTA
LETHALI MORBO CORREPTVS PIE PLACIDEQVE DECESSIT
III KAL. APRILIS A. D. M. DCC. XXVI
AETATIS SVAE LIII

Here lies

JAMES PEIRCE

an eminent divine
whose great learning happily joined
with a penetrating genius and solid judgment
seem to have left it doubtful
whether his excellent endowments of nature
or acquired abilities rendered him more conspicuous
he was educated at the university of **UTRECHT**
from whence returning home after five years
by indefatigable labour and diligence
he furnished his mind with most parts of literature
that might be of service to him
in the study of divinity
and having gained so great a knowledge of the best arts
he very faithfully discharged all the parts of his sacred office
and was equally celebrated for his accurate discourses in the pulpit
and his learned writings
but being always a most diligent inquirer after truth
happening in some things to change his opinion
he acted with equal prudence and integrity
for as he carefully concealed his sentiments from others
while he thought it was not their concern to know them
so when he judged the discovery of them necessary
no views of advantage or disadvantage could prevail with him
not to profess them publicly
by this means falling under the displeasure of some
with whom he had before lived in friendship
designing now to spend the remainder of his life more privately
tho not with less labour to himself
nor benefit to others
he applied himself chiefly to explain the sacred scriptures
in which excellent work having spent four years
and published some parts of it
which will be perpetual monuments of his abilities and learning
being seized with a fatal distemper he piously and calmly expired
on the **xxx** of march **M. DCC. XXVI**
in the **LIII** year of his age

Soon after the reverend Mr. Gey's prohibition, a particular friend of the deceased waited upon him, to desire his reasons for it. His first answer was, that he was not bound to give any reasons: But at length, in conversation, he did condescend to offer some objections. He first question'd the truth of a fact expressly asserted in the epitaph, viz. That Mr. Peirce carefully concealed his sentiments from others, while he thought it was not their concern to be acquainted with them: But this he seem'd to give up, when he was assured, that Mr. Peirce had not endeavour'd to make proselytes to his opinions before the time of his ejection. But then he objected to these words, *nullo suo commodo aut incommodo adduci potuit quo minus publice profiteretur*, that is, no views of advantage or disadvantage could prevail with him not to profess them publicly. The reverend Mr. Gey said, this was a great fault in Mr. Peirce; it was heretical obstinacy; and it was a point of conscience with him not to have him recommended for this to posterity in his church-yard. It was farther objected, that in the inscription he is said to have been *scriptis eruditis celebratus*, that is, celebrated for his learned writings; and some of these, the reverend rector observed, were against the church, and some against orthodoxy; and therefore he could not be easy to have them well spoken of in any place under his care and inspection. It would be the same thing, he added, as though he himself should recommend Mr. Peirce for those faults.

It was afterwards requested, that he would give leave to have the following words inscribed on the tomb, viz. Here lies the reverend, learned, and pious Mr. JAMES PEIRCE. But the reverend rector would by no means be persuaded to consent to that; saying, that Mr. Peirce could not be reverend,

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because he was not lawfully ordained; and that he was not pious, because he taught errors. I think he should have added, and that he was not learned, because he did not take directions from the reverend minister of his parish what books he should read. I gravely and seriously declare, that according to the best judgment I could ever form of him, from a long and very intimate acquaintance, his learning might as reasonably have been called in question as his piety. And I really can have no more doubt, that he had an habitual prevailing awe and reverence of God upon his mind, a sincere and ardent love to truth, and a steady uniform regard to virtue, than I have that he could read. However, for the peace and quiet of the reverend Mr. Gey's conscience, the inscription on this great and good man's tomb in his church-yard is only this; MR. JAMES PEIRCE'S Tomb, 1726.

It has not been a very uncommon thing to meet with grievous lamentations and heavy complaints from the reverend clergy of the establishment, on account of the squeamish scrupulous consciences of the poor dissenters. I verily think I have heard those people called narrow-soul'd, precise, hypocritical, and other such hard names, for pretending scruples of conscience, in matters that seem as nearly to concern conscience, religion, their acceptance with God, and their future happiness, as the permitting inscriptions on tomb-stones.

Hard and much to be lamented is the fate of every honest diligent inquirer, who has the misfortune to entertain any sentiment in religion, that is not embraced and countenanc'd by the majority of the reverend gentlemen round about him. While he thinks it necessary, or most prudent at least, to conceal such his opinion,, and keep it to himself, he shall be loudly called upon to speak out; and his silence shall be
repre-

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represented as craft, hypocrisy, insincere dealing, and wicked guile. When the circumstances of the case alter, and, partly perhaps by that very clamour it self, the man is induced to think, it becomes him to declare his sentiments more explicitly, let the declaration be made ever so modestly, and plainly attended with the circumstances of disinterestedness and self-denial, and therefore with all the appearances of impartiality and uprightness, it shall deserve no better a name than heretical obstinacy.

Every man is fallible and liable to mistake. A serious sense and frequent consideration of this should teach all of us modesty; and, one would think, should prevent such harsh censures and unkind treatment of those who differ from us. Would the reverend Mr. Gey be content to forego all his title and claim to piety and goodness, if in the course of his ministry he should happen to have taught errors, and published sentiments that are not exactly conform'd to truth, and agreeable to the nature of things?

The death even of an enemy is wont in a generous spirit to move the tenderest passions, and to put an effectual stop to the workings of envy and hatred; at least among laymen, and in differences of a civil nature, it has been observ'd to have this effect; but I find it is the nature of that heat which is raised by religious contests among divines to be more intense and more lasting.

I cannot indeed say that this conduct of the reverend Mr. Gey is altogether without a precedent. It is notorious in what manner Dr. Cheynel treated the incomparable Mr. Chillingworth, the glory of his age and nation, at the time of his interment. You have a particular account of it wrote by himself with an air of insult and boasting, in a small tract, intitled Chillingworthi Novissima. There he tells the university of Oxford, and the whole kingdom, " That he himself
" would.

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“ would have nothing to do with burying of him^a,
 “ that he did permit others, who had a better opi-
 “ nion of him than he had, to bury him^b; the dead
 “ to bury their dead out of his sight^c, ” this he
 permitted, as he says, “ out of mere humanity^d;
 “ but that the burial of an ass, and a funeral ser-
 mon on Jer. xxii. 18, 19. would have been more
 “ suitable to Mr. Chillingworth’s merit^e. ” And
 accordingly, lest he should have been suspected of too
 much moderation, and have been thought not to have
 shewn a due abhorrence of Mr. Chillingworth and
 his principles, he indeavours to justify his permission,
 by the account the sacred historian gives of the
 character and burial of Saul; “ Who, tho’ he was
 “ forsaken of God long before his death; though the
 “ spirit of the Lord departed from him, though he
 “ consulted a witch, and by her the devil at Endor,
 “ and an evil spirit from the Lord took possession of
 “ him, was, all this notwithstanding, solemnly bu-
 “ ried. ” Mr. Chillingworth had, in his last
 hours, desired that some part of the office for burial
 in the Common-prayer book should be read over him:
 This Dr. Cheynel would not allow, that there might
 be no assurance expressed of his resting in Christ, or
 hope of his resurrection to eternal life^f.

Nay, he more than insinuates that it was his
 opinion, as well as that of some others, “ That
 “ he ought not to have been buried in any respect
 “ like a christian, ”^g for such remarkable reasons
 as these, viz. “ Because he would not make a full
 “ and free confession of christian religion, ”^h that is,
 what Dr. Cheynel thought the christian religion;
 And “ because he was an heretick, ”ⁱ and had pub-
 lish’d a book against the truth, and against the
 church,

^a Chilling. Nov. pag. 59. ^b pag. 52. ^c *ibid.* & pag. 60.
^d pag. 52. ^e pag. 60, 61. ^f pag. 61. ^g pag. 53. ^h pag. 49.
ⁱ *ibid.* ^k pag. 50.

church ¹, “ a rotten and a cursed book ^m, tending
 “ to subintroduce errors and damnable heresies ⁿ, and
 “ which therefore he thought worthy to be buried
 “ with its author.”

The behaviour of this rigid presbyterian divine, on this occasion, has been generally condemn'd as very indecent and inhumane. I know not any body who has been hardy enough to pretend to vindicate it. His best friends have thought, the only thing that could be offered to abate the censure such extravagance deserved, was, that the doctor was disordered in his brain ^o. It is very surprising that there should appear any thing beautiful or attractive in this behaviour, or in any degree worthy of imitation. How much more justly has it been represented to the world by that ornament and blessing to his country, and true friend to mankind, the excellent lord bishop of Sarum; as teaching us all this good lesson, that the same heat and zeal in every sort of christians will produce the same fatal effects, and that the same thing cannot be amiable in our selves, which we condemn in all others, when practised against our selves ^p.

These are indeed poor mean methods of expressing resentment or disregard, and altogether ineffectual to the end proposed. For, as among all parties and persuasions, there are men, whose memories no inscriptions, no marble can preserve, or transmit with honour to posterity; so the righteous man, of every denomination, the man eminent for virtue and knowledge, goodness and extensive usefulness, without the help of epitaphs and tomb-stones, nay, in despite of all ill-natured attempts to lessen his influence while living, and pour contempt upon him when dead, will be had in everlasting remembrance. It

¹ pag. 59. ^m pag. 60. ⁿ pag. 57. ^o Dr. Calamy's Continuation, pag. 817. ^p Bp. of Bangor's [now Bishop of Sarum's] Letter to Dr. Snape, pag. 42, 43.

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It would be an unfeigned pleasure to me, to see many divines in the christian church as well qualified and disposed for publick service, as the worthy author of the following sermons was in his day; and I heartily wish, that when or wherever, in what country, in what age, or of what denomination soever, any such do arise, they may, living and dying, meet with more kind, generous and grateful treatment, than fell to his unhappy lot.

BENJAMIN AVERY.

It is a well-known fact that the principles of the human mind are not the same as those of the human body. The human mind is a complex system of ideas and feelings, which are constantly changing and growing. The human body, on the other hand, is a physical entity, which is subject to the laws of nature. The principles of the human mind are therefore more difficult to understand than those of the human body. The human mind is a mystery, and its principles are still a subject of debate among philosophers and scientists.

be a good thing.

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And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.

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An Useful Ministry a Valid One.

BEING A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT
EXON, May the 5th, 1714.

At a MEETING of the
UNITED MINISTERS
OF
DEVON and CORNWALL.

2 COR. III. 3.

*For as much as ye are manifestly declared
to be the epistle of Christ, ministred by
us, written not with ink, but with the
Spirit of the living God; not in tables
of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

THERE are many subtil devices, Sermon I.
whereby the enemy of mankind in-
deavours to hinder the success of the
gospel. Among others, this is no in-
considerable one: That he encourages prejudices
against the persons, whom Christ is pleased to
send

2 *An Useful Ministry a Valid One.*

Serm. I. send upon this noble design of turning sinners from the evil of their ways to God. He knows, if he can weaken their reputation by false aspersions, or render their authority suspected by some shew of objections, they will be little regarded, and he shall be the more secure of his prey.

This stratagem has been diligently plied of late, but it is a very old one; which however should not be esteem'd the more venerable or worthy of imitation by those who pretend the greatest respect for antiquity. We may trace it as high as *Moses's* time, who, when he supposed his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them, and therefore endeavour'd to set two of them at one again who were striving, met with this repulse from him that did his neighbour wrong (as such persons are always the most impertinent and cavilling) *Who made THEE a ruler and a judge over us?*

But, waving instances of this nature under the old dispensation, we may easily observe the same craft has been continually working from the beginning of the new. The *Priests* and the *Levites* scrupled the authority of the great forerunner of our Lord. *Why baptizest Thou, say they, if Thou be not That Christ, nor Elias, neither That Prophet?* But more unreasonable were they, who dealt in the same manner with our Lord himself, pragmatically asking him that question, which from his works they might have easily resolved themselves: *By what authority dost Thou these things? And who gave Thee this authority?*

And now you have heard the commission of our Lord was call'd in question, you may well expect it should afterward be with the disciples, as it had been before with their master. The most famous and eminent of them could not escape

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escape the like treatment. We need not wonder *Serm. I.*
at what has happen'd in our time, if we do but
observe, how the apostle *Paul*, who was inferior
to none in gifts, zeal, diligence or success, was
forc'd to vindicate his authority to some christi-
ans, who, though they were well acquainted
with him, yet gave way too much to the insinu-
ations of crafty and selfish men, who had crept
in among them, and call'd his authority in que-
stion, endeavouring upon the ruins of his reputa-
tion to establish their own. It might have been
expected, that *He*, if any man, should have
been secur'd from such usage, not only by the
miracles which constantly attested his *apostleship*,
but by his inoffensive behaviour, who so little
sought himself in any of his labours, and used not
to depreciate or condemn the endeavours of
others; nay, who rejoiced in the spreading the
gospel, when those who were enemies to himself
were employed in doing it: Which is a temper
very foreign to many in our days. *Some*, says he, *Phil. i 15,*
preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of
good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not
sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the
defence of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding
every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ
is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I
will rejoice. How reasonably might one of this
temper have expected others should have forbore
all attempts of undervaluing him! But they,
who have the best authority themselves, are ob-
served to be ordinarily least noisy and clamorous
about the authority of others.

The *Corinthians*, to whom this epistle was sent,
were a church of the apostle *Paul's* own plant-
ing; with whom he had spent a considerable

Serm. I. time : And yet now in his absence some arrogant *pretender* had rais'd base prejudices in their minds against him. This gave him occasion to speak much in his own vindication in both his epistles to that church. He employs a variety of arguments to justify to them his authority ; and, among others, he here makes use of one very likely to convince them, it being drawn from somewhat they felt in their own breasts ; viz. *The success of his ministry upon them.*

In the first verse of the chapter he begins very artfully and handsomly to clear himself of an objection, which seems to have been made against him upon the account of his manner of writing in his former epistle to them. *Do we, says he, begin again to commend our selves?* q. d. " You greatly mistake, if you imagine it a pleasant thing to me to be speaking of my self. I should have wholly abstained from every thing of that nature in my former epistle, and in this, had I not seen it necessary to clear my self of some imputations, which might hinder the usefulness of my ministry." He adds, *Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?* q. d. " If I were seeking my self, or were chiefly solicitous to make an interest for my self among you, I might use the little arts of insinuation, so happily practis'd by the false teachers, who have obtain'd the applause and admiration they desir'd among you, and in order to it have taken care not to come without letters to recommend them. But I am above those things, and have no need to commend my self, or to be commended to you, or by you." And that he might make them sensible how needless any formal recommendation was for him, he adds,

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adds, *Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts,* Sermon. I.
known and read of all men, q. d. “Ye are your
“ selves my clearest epistle, and the commen-
“ dation I more value my self upon, than any
“ that men can give me under their hands.
“ You your selves sufficiently commend me to
“ the world; who, by observing what you
“ are, may form a judgment concerning me.
“ In your conversation, as in *letters patents*, all
“ men may read what *commission* and *authority* I
“ have.” And then in the words of the text
he gives them a reason, why he accounted them
such a commendation of himself. *For as much as*
ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,
ministred by us, written not with ink, but with the
spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in
fleshy tables of the heart. In speaking to which
words I shall do these three following things.

I. I will represent to you, what it was in the
Corinthians, that manifestly declared them to be
the epistle of Christ, viz. Their unfeigned
conversion to christianity.

II. I will shew you, *how* by their conversion
they were manifestly declared to be the epistle of
Christ.

III. I will inquire, how far it is warrantable
for us now to esteem *any as the epistle of*
Christ; and to form a judgment by such a
kind of rule, as that which the apostle here
goes upon.

I. I will represent to you, what it was in the
Corinthians, that manifestly declared them to be the
epistle of Christ. Now that was *their unfeigned con-*
version to christianity. Nothing else can be under-
stood as referr'd to here. For it was somewhat

Serm. I. effected by the Spirit of God, in the effecting which he made use of the apostles ministry, as is expressly asserted in the text; *ministred*, says he, *by us, written not with ink, but with* (that is, by) *the spirit of the living God*. And what can we imagine that to be, but their *conversion*? Besides, it was somewhat *obvious* and plain to be discern'd; which not only their fellow christians, but all others who had any knowledge of them, might easily perceive, and could hardly avoid observing. To which purpose he speaks of them in the foregoing Verse, as *an epistle known and read of all men*. And such their *conversion* was. The alteration made in them was too great, not to command the notice and admiration of all about them. They had been *Gentiles, carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were led*. But now they were convinced of the unreasonableness of the worship they formerly paid them; and *knew that an idol is nothing in the world* (has nothing of Godhead in it, and that the Deity it represents is fictitious) *and that there is none other God but one*; and so to them there was now but one God the Father, of whom were all things, and they in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom were all things, and they by him. They were now, with the *Thessalonians*, *turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven*.

And as they had embraced a new object, so likewise a new manner of worship; offering all their worship through Jesus the mediator, in a subjection to whose ordinances they voluntarily put themselves. They became the subjects and servants of a new lord, and acted by the direction of a new law, intirely opposite to their former manner and course of life. The change of their notions would have been a small matter, had not
their

1 Cor.
xii. 2.

Ch. viii.
4. 6.

1 Thess.
i. 2. 10.

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their new notions influenced them to a more regular and orderly conversation. Had they retain'd their old vices in the profession they made of a new religion, they would have brought a disgrace upon that, and have gain'd little reputation to themselves. But the change was truly glorious, and evidenced the nobleness of that religion they turn'd to, when they abandon'd all their former impieties, and enter'd upon a strict course of piety and virtue. In this case, the greatness of mens former enormities, instead of lessening, adds to the reputation of that religion, by which they are reclaim'd from them. For who can forbear admiring and praising that religion, which of a sudden turns the worst of men into the best? Now this was the case of these *Corinthians*. Their city had been for a long time remarkable for debauchery. Their situation between two seas gave them a vast advantage above any city in *Greece* for trade, that had render'd them exceeding wealthy; and their wealth had fed their luxury, intemperance and lasciviousness: So that there were few, if any cities, which did equal *Corinth* in the dissolute and sensual lives of its inhabitants, who were indeed infamous enough to become a *proverb* among the *Greeks*. And we are not to think those *Corinthians*, who became *converts* to christianity, had escap'd the contagion of the place, any more than their fellow citizens, who still persisted in their old religion. We are certain of the contrary, by the account given of them in the other epistle. *Know* 1 Cor. vi. ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners.

Serm. I. *oners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were SOME OF YOU: But ye are washed, &c.* And when he says, *such were some of you*, he seems to mean, that *some of them* had been bad enough to be chargeable, if not with all, yet with several of the worst and vilest of those vices; or however, it is certain, he did not speak only of *some* with a design of excepting the rest, as free from all these abominations. This appears by his mentioning *idolaters*, which was unquestionably the character of every one of them before their *conversion*. Now for such vile and profligate wretches to become sober, temperate, chaste, just, devout; and, in a word, exemplary in all those duties and virtues which were most opposite to their former vices, was an illustrious change indeed, and most worthy to be mentioned, as it is in the text, as a noble commendation of their present disposition and behaviour, and of the means whereby it was brought about. The fame of such *faith* as theirs *toward God*, could not but *spread abroad in every place*. Such eminent obedience must come abroad unto all men.

1 Thess.
i. 8.

Rom. xvi.
19.

Their church, it must be own'd, notwithstanding all the time and pains the apostle had spent among them, had still some *spots* and *blemishes* in it, the marks of its imperfect militant state. For however he *commends* them, he *reproves* them too; and it appears by his reproofs, there were some very disorderly persons among them. But, in the main, they were an excellent church, and thought worthy of much commendation for their conformity to the rules of the gospel. See how he commends them in the general, even when he was about to blame them for a particular disorder. Now I praise you, brethren, says he, *that you remember me in all things; and*

1 Cor. xi. 2.

and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. *Serm. I.*
 There were some hypocrites without doubt in *That*, as there always will be in every church:
 But the church was to receive her denomination
 from the *major* part, which was sound and good;
 and, at the writing of the former epistle, when
 the disorders were at the worst, deserved to be
 spoken of in such high expressions. *I thank my* *1 Cor. 1.*
God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which *4, 5, 6, 7.*
is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye
are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all
knowledge: Even as the testimony of Christ was re-
ceived among you. So that ye come behind in no gift,
waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In
 which words, he thanks God not only for the
miraculous gifts which that church had plentifully
 received, and which, 'tis acknowledged, render-
 ed their *conversion* the more remarkable, but
 likewise for their *holiness and piety*. This appears
 by his mentioning their *waiting for the coming of*
our Lord Jesus Christ, which is an usual descripti-
 on of a *christian conversation*. And well it may
 be so, since Christ's coming, where-ever it is
 believed and seriously remember'd, as it is by all
 those who wait for it, must necessarily make
 men holy in all manner of conversation. And I
 conceive it is upon the account of their *holiness*,
 and not their *extraordinary gifts*, they are com-
 mended in the text, and stiled *the epistle of Christ*.
 The last words of the verse seem to confine the
 expression to this sense, wherein he says, *This*
epistle was written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy
tables of the heart: Which certainly refers not to
 their *miraculous gifts*, but wholly to the *law of*
Christ; the writing of which is compar'd to, and
 prefer'd before the writing of the law, which God
 gave to *Moses*. But this leads me to consider,

II. How

Serm. I.



II. How the *Corinthians*, by their conversion, were manifestly declared to be the *epistle of Christ*. Now this expression may import these two things.

I. That *Christ* was the *author* of their conversion. An *epistle* is said to be his, by whose direction 'tis penn'd and drawn up. In like manner, when their conversion is spoken of under the metaphor of an *epistle* (of which a reason will be presently given) 'tis most properly attributed to *Christ* as the author and composer of it.

The apostles were tender of the honour of their Lord, and cautious of assuming any thing to themselves, lest they should seem to derogate from him. And so this apostle speaks of himself only as an *amanuensis*, imploy'd by *Christ* in writing the *epistle*. *Ministred*, says he, by us; written not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God. And therefore, in the next verse but one, he adds: Not that we are sufficient of our selves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament. However he had been imploy'd, yet he neither was, nor would be thought to be, the principal cause of that blessed work: No, he look'd upon himself, and his companions in preaching the gospel to the *Corinthians*, as ministers by whom they believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. And whatever industry they used in planting and watering, yet the success was wholly to be ascribed to God, who gave the increase. In their preaching, they were labourers together with God, or rather perhaps of God; that is, imployed by him; whence such as were converted by their ministry were to be look'd upon as God's husbandry, as God's building.

1 Cor. iii.
5, 6, 9.

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The work is too great to be accomplish'd by human skill. The charms of eloquence, and the strength of reason and argument alone can never assuage boisterous passions, conquer impetuous desires, and win the sinner bewitch'd to his lusts, to an unfeigned and chearful subjection to the law of God. How often do we see the strongest arguments from everlasting rewards and punishments prove ineffectual! Nay, arguments drawn from such things as sinners regard, have very little force upon those, who are strongly addicted to their lusts. The misery and want extravagancies threaten them with, either by their natural tendency, or their offensiveness to their best friends, will not conquer, nay, frequently not so much as curb and restrain for a little time their inclination to them. Vicious inclinations are the most unreasonable things in the world, and therefore somewhat more than bare reason and argument is necessary to rectify a mind enslav'd by them, and to form it to a divine likeness. This is only to be effected by a mighty power. Whence 'tis so commonly in the scripture ascribed to *the Holy Spirit*; as 'tis particularly in the text; *Written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God.*

But it may be here inquir'd: Would it not, upon this account, have been most proper to have stiled these *Corinthians* the *epistle of the Holy Spirit*?

I answer: We are here to consider in what quality the *Holy Spirit* acts, and that is, as the vicegerent and deputy of our Redeemer; who promis'd, when he was leaving the world, to supply the want of his own presence with his disciples in person, by his Spirit, and to be thus *with them all* way, even unto the end of the world. So that what
the

Matth.
xxviii. 20.

Serm. I. the Spirit now does, he does in the name and behalf of Christ; and our Redeemer now accomplishes all his work in this world by his Spirit. Wherefore though the Spirit was the immediate author of their conversion, 'tis without any manner of impropriety ascrib'd to Christ, and they are called *the epistle of Christ*.

2. When the apostle calls the *Corinthians*, upon the account of their conversion, *the epistle of Christ*, he means, that Christ had thereby made some *declaration* of his mind. We consider an epistle as a signification of the mind of the writer: And such did he look upon the *Corinthians* in their conversion to be; which, I conceive, is the true reason why he makes use of this metaphor. And without straining it, we may say they are represented as the *epistle of Christ*, or a declaration of his will, upon a double account.

1. Because they were by their conversion *form'd* into the mind and will of Christ. He has made a declaration of his will in his word, from which we are to learn our religion, and to which we are to have recourse as to a sure standard, in the examining and trying every doctrine. But little notice is taken of this by a careless world; who will not be at the pains of learning what our religion is, out of the perfect rule of it. Christ therefore has taken care in a more easy way to give them some notices of it; and by changing the hearts and lives of sinners, he sets before their eyes examples of the religion he has instituted, and shews the world what the design of his gospel is. This is a likely means of abating their unreasonable prejudices, and winning them to an attentive consideration of the revelation he has left us. For if men will allow themselves to make any serious reflections, they must be sensible

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fible of an extraordinary excellency and loveliness in a truly christian conversation. When the rules of the gospel are copied out fairly into the life, the lustre of them is too great not to strike the beholders with admiration. This should make christians careful to live up to their rule, that, as our Saviour says, *their light may so shine before men, as that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven.* 'Tis no unlikely thing, that such as at present *do not obey the word, may without the word by beholding the good conversation of christians be won*, first to a liking, and then to an hearty embracing christianity. So that the circumspect deportment of christians is a compendious kind of declaration of the mind of Christ to an inconsiderate world; who may by beholding it learn what sobriety, temperance, humility, meekness, self-denial, equity, charity, mercifulness, trust in God, resignation and devotedness to his will, and, in short, what universal holiness Christ expects in his disciples and followers.

We are led to this sense of the expression by the last clause of the text, wherein the apostle compares their conversion to the giving of the old law, and says, *this epistle of Christ was not written in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart*, q. d. "This is a more excellent and noble way, which Christ has taken to write, and, as it were, publish his law. He has deeply engraven it upon, and made it an inward governing principle of your hearts and all your actions which proceed from them; by means whereof all that converse with you may easily come to the knowledge of it."

It cannot be objected reasonably against this sense, that the expression is too great for the thing;

Serm. I. thing ; since that is sometimes set forth in the holy scriptures by more lofty expressions than *the* Gal. iv. 16. *epistle of Christ*: Such as, *Christ formed in christians*, Eph. iii. 17. and *Christ dwelling in them*. True christians then are *the epistle of Christ* ; when their conversation is conform'd to the rule of the gospel, and appears a kind of *transcript* of the mind and will of Christ.

2. The *Corinthians* are here call'd *the epistle of Christ* upon the account of their conversion, because Christ thereby signified his mind concerning the apostle, and gave a *testimonial* of his commission and valid authority. *Ye are*, says he, *the epistle of Christ, ministred by us*, q. d. “ Christ design'd, by making use of me in converting you, to give an attestation, and set as it were his seal to my ministry. He has made it evident that he sent me, by his working together with me.”

And what argument could be more proper to establish his authority with the *Corinthians* than this ; of the truth of which they must be supposed to be well assur'd ? Compare herewith his manner of arguing with the same church in his other epistle to them. *Am I not an apostle ? Am I not free ? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ? Are not you my work in the Lord ? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you : For the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord*. Where he appeals, as he does in the text, to the happy success of his ministry among them ; to *their being his work in the Lord* ; and therefore styles them *the seal of his apostleship* ; and argues, that though his apostleship should be doubtful to others, yet it could not be so to them, since they had the same evidence of it they had of their own christianity.

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And thus likewise he argues elsewhere in his *Serm. I.* second epistle to them. *Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, 2 Cor. xiii. but is mighty in you — Examine your selves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. He judg'd their being in the faith an evident proof of Christ's speaking in him, and owning him as his minister.*

And when in the text he calls them *the epistle of Christ*, written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart; he certainly intimates, that as God's writing the law in tables of stone was an attestation of the commission of *Moses*, to whom he deliver'd them, to carry them to the people; so the *Corinthians* were to look upon Christ's writing his laws in their hearts, as an attestation of his commission, whose ministry he was pleased to make use of in doing it. And upon this account he calls them *his own epistle* in the foregoing verse, whom he calls *the epistle of Christ* in the text. *Ye are*, says he, *our epistle*; that is, written in my behalf: *Ye are the epistle by which Christ has been pleased to recommend me.*

Now his argument here is of this nature. You *Corinthians* have been effectually prevail'd upon to relinquish your idolatrous and wicked course of life, and to turn sincerely to God by Christ. This happy change was too great, noble and difficult to be effected by any human skill and power, and must therefore have been the work of the Redeemer. Christ, who has wrought you to this, has done it by my ministry. But it is not to be thought, he would thus concur with, or make use of a ministry, which he did not approve. And therefore I may well esteem his converting you by my means as an attestation to my ministry, and may look upon you as
mani-

Serm. I. manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written in my behalf, whereby he does in effect ratify and seal to you, and to the world, my ministry and apostleship.

And thus I have endeavour'd to explain the apostle's meaning, and clear his reasoning to you. And doubtless *these things were written*, and are in the scriptures handed down to us, for our learning; and therefore 'tis not improper for us,

III. To inquire, How far 'tis warrantable for us now to esteem any as *the epistle of Christ*, and to form a judgment concerning the ministers of the present time by such a kind of rule, as that which the apostle here goes upon. There would have been less occasion to treat of this matter, had not some men appear'd so earnestly desirous of condemning the ministry of their neighbours. Of whom it may well be said, as 'tis of some *Gal. iv. 17.* who troubled the *Galatians*; *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you,* (some copies read *us* — To express our case we may join both; for they would *exclude* both *you* and *us*; *you* from the church; and *us* from the ministry) *that you might affect them*, and confine your respects to them. I suppose every one will allow, that 'tis very desirable, some certain scripture rule should be propos'd to examine men's pretensions by, and that it should be such an one as is level to the capacities of all, since every christian is to judge and choose for himself, what ministry to sit under. Now with such a rule, I think, the discourse of the apostle here supplies us. For if we may judge by the success and usefulness of any ministry, that is a thing liable to the observation of the meanest christian, who is disposed seriously to inquire what ministry he should prefer.

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I shall briefly comprise my sense of this matter Serm. I.
in these following propositions : ~

1. 'Tis certain, when our Lord erected a church, he design'd to *continue* it to the end of the world. This is evident by his promise, that *the gates of hell should not prevail against it.*

Matth.
xvi. 18.

2. As Christ will have a church, so he will have a ministry in it through all ages of the world. For the proof of which I need only appeal to that express text ; *He gave some apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ : Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

3. If Christ has a ministry for the edification of his church, then that ministry may be *known* and *distinguish'd*. Were there no marks, by which the church could distinguish the officers he has appointed for their edification, how should they know to whom they should apply themselves, or in what method they should seek their edification ? As Christ the great Shepherd has appointed shepherds under him to feed his flock, so he cannot be supposed to have left his flock wholly *at uncertainties*, who they are, to whom they should commit themselves in order to their being fed.

4. The true ministers of Christ's church, in the *first* planting of it, were distinguish'd by some marks, by which those in succeeding Ages cannot be known. When the first foundations of the christian church were to be laid, and Christ's ministers were sent forth to spread a new religion in the world, not only extraordina-

Serm. I. ry degrees of wisdom, holiness and courage, but an extraordinary attestation of their commission was necessary. Hence the apostles, who were first sent forth, were indow'd with a power of working miracles, and discerning spirits; which, together with all such extraordinary operations of the Spirit, are long since ceased, and consequently cannot be the marks of the true ministry in the present age. There is no church or ministry now in the world, which pretends to these, except the church of *Rome*, which has been detected in so many of her forgeries, that, instead of advancing, she has sunk her reputation with all wise men, by pretending to them. Among *Protestants* there are none, who appeal to any *such* evidence of their commission.

5. Since those extraordinary gifts, which the apostles appeal'd to as evidences of their commission, are universally ceas'd, 'tis but reasonable the pretensions of ministers should now be examin'd by any *other* evidences they appeal'd to, and particularly by this of *success*. For certainly they did not attempt to establish their authority by any weak and insufficient arguments. And indeed by appealing to the evidence, which did not depend upon their extraordinary gifts, they may be understood to direct christians, how to judge of mens pretensions in all the following ages of the world. And consequently it cannot be thought unreasonable for christians now to lay a great stress upon this argument from *success*, since the apostles themselves did so.

6. Though the success of the apostles and first ministers of the christian church might, upon the account of some circumstances, have an advantage above that of the ministers of
suc-

succeeding ages ; yet the *main* reason, why success was an argument in the behalf of their ministry, will hold good to vindicate any successful ministry to the end of the world. The number of their converts, and their being converted from *Gentilism* and the grossest idolatry, must be own'd to be circumstances which greatly enhance'd the success of their ministry : But still the *principal* reason, why success was an attestation of the apostle's commission, was, that from the success it appear'd Christ own'd their ministry by making it effectual, the work being too great to be wrought by any but himself. Now this is true in all ages, and the conversion of a sinner, and the establishing and improving him afterward, must now as necessarily be the work of Christ by his Spirit, as at first. And therefore success must as really argue the interposition of Christ now as ever. And if his interposition was *formerly*, it must be *still* an evidence of his owning and authorizing any ministry.

7. There is the more reason to argue the validity of any ministry from the success of it, because this is an argument from the *principal design* and end of the office. I cannot easily imagine by what better rule we can judge of the goodness of any thing, than by its intire tendency and usefulness to promote the chief *end* of it. This was the main reason of the institution of the ministry, that sinners might be converted, and saints edified. That ministry therefore, which contributes most to the effecting these things, must, without all question, be the ministry which the author of the institution does most approve.

As that religion must be best, which is best contriv'd in its doctrines, rules and motives

Serm. I. to make men universally holy ; and the christi-
 an religion has in this respect vastly the advantage above any other ; so that ministry seems always to me most approv'd of Christ, and therefore fittest to be chosen by christians, which is best adapted to promote true christianity, and, by the blessing of Christ, is made most effectual to that end. Nor can I apprehend it dangerous for christians to have a regard to this rule in making their choice. For, however, they may find themselves puzzled with the subtilties of a dispute, and may perhaps be at a loss what to think of a particular mode and ceremony, whether it be pleasing to Christ, or no ; yet that an universal holiness, which is the image of God and of Christ, is pleasing to him, must be past all doubt and question with them. And there will be good reason for them to judge the ministers are *labourers together with God* (or of God) if they can evidently discern their people *are God's husbandry, are God's building*.

1 Cor.
 iii. 9.

This evidence from success may be much strengthen'd by various other circumstances, which christians will easily observe to attend a successful ministry, and whereby Christ, who would not have his people be at a loss about the means of their edification, will take care to recommend to them that ministry, which he best likes, and will most own. Give me leave to name a few of these.

1 Tim.
 iii. 2.

1. Without all doubt, a competent measure of *scripture knowledge*, a profession of the true faith, and a renouncing such opinions as are inconsistent with christianity, always accompany the ministry which Christ owns with success. Such are requir'd to be *apt to teach* ; but how can they be so, if they are unacquainted with the

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the very rule of their teaching? *The scripture is* Serm. I.
profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God 2 Tim. iii.
(or minister of the gospel) *may be perfect, thorough-* 16, 17.
ly furnished unto all good works. 'Tis desirable,
they, who are design'd to teach others, should
be, as *Timothy* was, brought up from their Ch. v. 15.
childhood in the knowledge of the holy scrip-
tures. And if men profess and preach any thing
inconsistent with the main essential doctrines of
christianity, they subvert mens souls, and can-
not be the means of saving them. Christ owns
not such with success: But they are *grievous* Acts xx,
wolves, that spare not the flock. 'Tis therefore a 29.
necessary qualification of true ministers, that
they *hold fast the faithful word, as they have been* Tit. i. 9.
taught, that they may be able by sound doctrine, both
to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

2. I cannot but think, an apparent *regularity*
of life and conversation is one qualification of
the ministers, whom Christ is pleased to own
with success, and whom christians should choose
to adhere to. I am sure, this is absolutely ne-
cessary, if we may judge by the epistles to *Ti-*
mothy and *Titus*; the author of which thought
it very proper also to mention the regularity of
his own behaviour, when he would recommend
himself to the *Thessalonians*. *Ye are witnesses,* says 1 Thess.
he, *and God also, how holily, and justly, and un-* ii. 10.
blameably we behaved our selves among you that be-
lieve. Men will never be heartily concern'd to
spread that religion, which they have not them-
selves cordially imbrac'd. Hypocrites may
crowd themselves into the *ministry*, as well as
into the *church*, and may demean themselves so
as to pass undiscern'd: And in that case it may
please God to render their ministry successful.

Serm. I. Charity teaches us to judge men sincere in their pretences, till they evidence the contrary. And it were sad indeed for the church of God, if their edification were so precarious, as absolutely to depend upon the internal holiness and sincerity of their ministers. God therefore, out of a regard to his own institution, and that charity which he approves in christians, may succeed the ministrations of such. But when these hypocrites pull off the mask, and retain not any longer the outward shew of holiness and piety, but become openly and scandalously loose, they forfeit all claim to the respect and charitable opinion of the church of God, and are to be avoided by all serious christians. Now 'tis not in this case charity, but downright folly and madness, for men to think they may safely put their souls under their care; since 'tis notorious they take no care of their own. And as all hypocrites invading the office are unapprov'd of God, so when their hypocrisy is made manifest to all, and 'tis therefore apparently the christians duty to forsake them; I cannot think, God does any longer own them with success upon those, who through a supine negligence and sloth remain contented under their ministry, without seeking out after a better, as they are bound to do, at the peril of their precious souls.

3. Where-ever Christ owns a ministry with success, the main tendency of it will evidently be to promote the *most momentous* and indisputable matters of religion, and not the little *peculiarities* of a party. There are some things, of which we may say what is said of meat: They commend us not to God; for neither if we use them, are we the better; neither if we use them not, are we

1 Cor.
viii. 8.

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we the worse. And where things of this nature Serm. I.
(to speak the most favourably of them) are
much dwelt upon, and urged with the greatest
vehemence, 'tis visible what the success is. A
minister's judgment may be right concerning the
lawfulness or unlawfulness of less substantial
things which are matter of debate; and yet,
the allowing an undue proportion of his ministry
and his zeal to them, may very much hinder
his promoting those ends, by which the success
of any ministry is chiefly to be discern'd. The
great and essential things, that constitute the
kingdom of God (that *kingdom of God*, which, our Luke xvii.
Saviour says, *cometh not with observation, or* ^{21.}
pomp and splendor; but is within men) are not Rom. xiv.
meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy ^{17, 18.}
in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth
Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.
There is no party, but a man may be moulded
into the notions and forms by which 'tis distin-
guish'd, and yet remain unacceptable to God.
But there is no party of christians, wherein
righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,
will not evidence a man a true subject of the
kingdom of God, a servant of Christ, and most
acceptable to both.

The design of the ministry is to renew depra-
ved souls, to restore them to a likeness to God
in righteousness and holiness, and so to fit them
for a blissful and eternal abode in his presence;
and, in order to these things, to gain them to
an unfeigned and intire subjection to the media-
tor. The success of any ministry lies in obtain-
ing these ends, and without that all a minister's
pains are lost. And as that ministry, which
dwells most upon these things, is most adapted
to its proper end, so 'tis not hard to observe,

Serm. I. that the blessing of Christ most attends and prospers it.

Gal. ii.
5, 6.

4. The success and usefulness of any ministry will then be more easily judg'd an evidence of its *validity*, when the *opposition* made against it is built most upon *weak* and *fallible* authorities, and but little upon the holy scriptures. The whole of a christian's religion is in his *bible*, and when he is requir'd to walk by any other rule than that of divine revelation, by those who would *seem to be somewhat; whatsoever they are, it must make no matter to him, he is not to give place to them by subjection, no, not for an hour*. If he finds a ministry agreeable to the holy scriptures, he may be satisfied in choosing it, without inquiring whether fathers, synods, or magistrates approve it. And it will always be an argument with me of the validity of any ministry, when I see the fierce and crafty adversaries of it at a great loss for scripture arguments to overthrow it.

5. The argument from success receives an additional strength, when that success is obtain'd by a ministry, notwithstanding many worldly *discouragements* which attend it. It has been ordinarily the lot of God's most faithful servants to meet with little countenance from men. The world lies in wickedness, and the stream uses to run strongly against those who testify against the wickedness of it.

A *persecuting* spirit is a shrewd sign of an ill cause; and those men, *whose weapons are carnal*, and who desire to enforce their discipline by oppression, manage their *warfare* in a very different manner from the apostles. But to be used hardly and unkindly, to be despised and persecuted for conscience sake, yields a strong presumption of a man's sincerity, and that he is accusom'd

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to the practice of the duty of self-denial, which Serm. I. our Lord has declar'd absolutely necessary in all his disciples. And when they, who have no carnal weapons to back their arguments, but meet with a violent opposition from their neighbours, are favour'd with the most success in their ministrations, 'tis a sign of the goodness of their warfare, and that *their weapons are, though 2 Cor. x. 4 not carnal, yet mighty through God, to the pulling down strong holds.* The divine power is more conspicuous, in converting sinners, when there are no worldly advantages on the side of truth to recommend it.

It cannot be thought unreasonable to lay some stress upon this, since the apostle in this very epistle argues from some such considerations the preferableness of his own ministry to that of his competitors; and speaks as though an excess in suffering were a full proof of a superiority in office. *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more: In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure (or more exceedingly) in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft, &c.* Ch. xi. 23;

I forbear to mention, as I might, other characters of a true ministry, but proceed to *apply* what has been said in these three following reflections.

I. If by such things, as those insisted on, the validity and goodness of any ministry may be discern'd, the *objections* against our ministry are certainly of no moment; but our *claims* and *pretensions* must be supported by much better and stronger arguments, than are theirs who object with so much fury against us. As often as I seriously consider the state of our present differences, and review the little observation I have made

Serm. I. made in the world, I am forc'd to fall in and finish all with that determination : *sit anima mea cum puritanis anglicanis.* And 'tis a considerable pleasure and satisfaction to me, to find my self join'd with those on earth, with whom, my conscience tells me, I cannot but desire to be number'd at the great separation of the last day.

2 Cor.
xii. 11.

I am sensible this argument may seem *invidious*, and many will be apt to think it carries in it an air of *boasting*, and so of vanity and folly. But they, who will be forwardest to censure our argument, have, of all men, most reason to be satisfied with the apology, which, with the apostle, we make for our selves. For if we are *become fools in glorying*, we may well expect they should *bear with our folly*, since they are themselves the persons *who have compell'd us*. I hope it will be no offence, that we shew our selves tender of the reputation of our ministry. If we were as indifferent about that as we see many are, we should have little reason to complain of any persons judging us unworthy of the character. I am sure none can have reason to be offended, that in a place, where we are assaulted with so much violence, we defend our selves, and for a justification of our ministry appeal with the apostle to the usefulness of it, humbly requesting our adversaries, if they think fit, to put their ministry upon the like trial.

Let then the *lives* and *conversations* of our people be compar'd with those of their neighbours ; I am sure we need not fear the sentence of any indifferent and impartial judge. Nay, our adversaries themselves must give it in our favour, if they will but honestly own, by what rule they guess at the characters and principles of strangers when they happen into their company.

pany. Let them but frankly declare, on which Serm. I. side they ordinarily suspect the swearer and the drunkard to be, and what opinion they entertain of such as abstain from, and shew an abhorrence of those vices.

I own we are not free from *hypocrites*. What church ever was from the beginning of the world? Nor are we clear in our assemblies of all loose persons; but I verily think our communions are not ordinarily to be reproach'd for persons openly scandalous and profane. Those of such a character must belong to another, if they are of any communion; for no interest of a party prevails with us to receive or keep them knowingly in ours. No one, that I know of, charges us with suffering the deists and open debauchees to thrust themselves in to receive the Lord's supper among us, as a qualification for offices and places of profit and trust, to the scandal of our function, and the vilest prostitution of the most sacred of all our Lord's ordinances and institutions. When such as have been brought up among us become loose and vicious, they know they can't expect to be easy in our communions, and therefore soon leave us; and, I hope, without our regret, unless we could see them mend among us. And the usefulness of our ministry is confirm'd by this common observation: That such as leave us ordinarily grow worse, and they who come over to us frequently grow better.

Farther; were not our people free from the horrid sins, which are so prevailing in the land, their adversaries would not fail to make them hear of them, and would have less occasion to charge them so often with suspected crimes only without evidence; and the cry of hypocrisy would

Serm. I. would be much weaker, and the charge of particular vices and immoralities, that could be prov'd, would be much louder. Were scandalous persons as rife in our communion, as in theirs, they would not triumph at the rate they sometimes do; when they think they have got an advantage by a particular person's disgracing his profession. Single instances of immorality among us would then be as little taken notice of as they are now among them. In short, if *sobriety, righteousness and godliness*, are the great things, which *the grace of God teaches*, and the grace of God is there best learn'd, and consequently best taught, where these things are most prevailing; we may safely venture the reputation of our ministry upon this issue, what communion these things are most to be found in; and that notwithstanding the vast inequality of our numbers.

When our interest was very great in the nation, and it was thought necessary to weaken, and (if possible) destroy it, persecuting, and the encouraging vice and debauchery, were judg'd the most proper methods in order to it. And when *iniquity abounded*, our interest with that of religion, or plain common christianity (for we plead for no other) considerably declined, and our ministry became less successful than it had been before. And yet I doubt not but the greatest share of the little religion and piety, that has continued in the nation, has been owing to that ministry which is at this day so much despised and vilified. And doubtless the methods, which our adversaries then took, discover'd plainly enough what opinion they had of us, and that their displeasure against us was, because they thought we had too much religion;
al-

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although God at the same time permitted their *Serm. I.*
fury, that by his righteous judgments he might rebuke us for having so little, and sinking so much below the piety of our ancestors.

Farther ; if men will calmly consider these things, the other circumstances I mention'd, will, I doubt not, be found to accompany and recommend the ministry I plead for.

1. Our adversaries themselves pretend not, I think, to charge us with holding opinions contrary to the *christian faith*. They are pleased indeed to make a shew of despising us as meanly qualified. And 'tis no wonder, if under our *disadvantages* there are some, whose *attainments* in learning are less than one would desire in a minister. They ought not however to bear hard upon us ; considering how much worse it has been with themselves, and that there was a time, when many illiterate tradesmen were put into the ministry among themselves, whose publick performances were only reading prayers and homilies ; and considering especially that notwithstanding all their present advantages, 'tis much worse with them still. For, I hope, *the greater part of those, who come to be ordained among us, are not ignorant to a degree not to be apprehended by those, who are not obliged to know it ; and that the greatest part of knowledge is not that to which they are the greatest strangers, I mean the plainest parts of the scriptures.* I am well satisfied, if there could be found any so ignorant among us, they could not say in excuse of their ignorance, *That their tutors never mention the reading of the scriptures to them.* We have none so unacquainted with the scriptures, as *that they can give no account, or at least a very imperfect one, of the contents even of the gospels.* We have none, whose ignorance is
such,

Serm. I. *such, that in a well regulated state of things they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament. I hope, so gross an ignorance in the fundamentals of religion has not spread it self so much among those of our side, who ought to teach others, as that they need that one teach them the first principles of the oracles of God.* Such kind of insufficiency they will not charge us with, as they know we can them, upon the evidence and testimony of an excellent person, who has an opportunity of knowing it, and is so honest and fair not to dissemble that sad truth, which he is forc'd, with all good men, grievously to bewail.

See Bishop of Sarum's Pref. to his Past. Care, p. 5, 6.

2. Our ministers are not *loose and disorderly* in their behaviour. When any become so, they soon sink their reputation, and their ministry is quickly at an end among us. Or, if it be not, the people only can be to blame, who, as they ought, so they have it in their power easily to rid themselves of it. And 'tis unreasonable we should be reproach'd with any vicious persons, whom we have rejected; at least, it will not be very modest for those to upbraid us, who have been so kind as to receive them to officiate in their own church.

3. Nothing can be more evident to those, who are at all acquainted with our ministry, than that it aims at promoting the great and *essential* things of our holy religion, *viz.* the explaining and urging upon men *repentance* towards God, *faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ, and an universal *obedience* to his laws.

We have plainly discover'd a greater concern to make our hearers *good christians*, than *zealous party men*. And, to speak freely, I think we have been almost universally guilty of an error,

though 'tis an error (as they say) on the right hand: That we have wholly, in a manner, wav'd in our sermons the matters in controversy between us and our adversaries, which though they are of little moment, if compar'd with the other, yet doubtless are of too great moment to be quite left out of our discourses. Herein, I think, we have been injurious to our own interest and that of truth.

But if we consider what course has been taken by many of our adversaries, their error will appear to have been much worse. The heat of their zeal against us has consum'd their discretion, and their very ministry it self. The tendency of a great part of their sermons has been not to inform but abuse mens judgments, and inflame their anger and wrath. They have not only lavish'd away their ministry upon the least useful subjects, but by their preaching have render'd their hearers of a more malicious and inveterate, that is, of a more unchristian spirit than they would otherwise have been.

4. With what *weapons* have our adversaries managed their opposition against our ministry? Those who are vers'd in our controversy cannot but observe a great scarcity of scripture arguments, where our adversaries should have been most copious in them, considering what great stress they are pleas'd to lay upon the things; for what reason they can tell best themselves. One chief aim of their managers seems to be, to lead men from the *scriptures* to *fathers* and *councils*, not because their constitution is not condemn'd by them, but because they know the people have neither time, nor capacity to examine these; and so when they have got them into such a wood, they hope easily to bewilder and loose them in it.

'Tis

Serm. I. 'Tis visible, the little narrow interest of a party runs through all that some men meddle with, and spoils much good, which some of their designs would otherwise probably produce, and in the advancement of which, if they were generously pursued, we should readily join with them. I appeal for the truth of what I say, to their management of *charity schools*, and their *society for propagating the gospel*: Concerning which I must say, 'tis great pity good designs should be spoiled, and that men should give so much occasion that *their good should be evil spoken of*.

I would not here be misunderstood, as though, while I make this comparison, I design'd to confine the success of the ministry to that of any one single denomination among us. I persuade myself, there are among the ministers of all parties, those, who prefer the most important matters of religion to the lesser things, by which their party is distinguish'd. And where the appearance is smallest, we will not easily be persuaded that their case is not better than that of the church of *Sardis*, which, notwithstanding all her faults, deserv'd this testimony of our Lord:

Rev. iii. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis.* So gloriously does charity overcome and triumph over that unreasonableness, unmercifulness and cruelty that oppose it. Would to God our adversaries, who seem to have a very defective notion of that virtue, the name of which they so much magnify, would so far lay aside their prejudices, as to look abroad among their neighbours, and learn from them, what that charity
 1 Cor. xiii. is, which *suffers long, and is kind, which neither*
 5, 6, 7. *envieth, nor is rash, which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, which beareth all things, indureth all things,*

things, hopeth all things, and sometimes hopeth against hope. For our part, we can truly say, when we see ministers unblemish'd in their reputation, and zealous in their indeavours to promote the great ends of our holy religion, we heartily rejoice; we desire not they should be forbidden, or any ways hinder'd, much less that fire should come down from heaven and consume them, though they follow not with us: May they go on and prosper. For since they work the work of the Lord, even as we also do, and in the main walk by the same rule with us, why should we not wish, that peace may be on them, as we doubt not, they also do on us? But give me leave to say, that these, though the ornaments of their communion, can add but little reputation to the angry generation, who are so free in condemning us. My reason is; because they are asham'd of all such, and number them on our side; who own our selves not displeas'd at our having them, and all honest and good men reckon'd in the same interest with our selves.

5. *Finally*; The bitterest of all our adversaries themselves cannot be displeas'd, if of the last circumstance, which serves to recommend a ministry, we speak with some kind of triumph; I mean, our being embarras'd with all visible discouragements. For we can bear them record, they have been always industrious to furnish us with it, and have been willing we should keep this argument intirely to our selves. And for our part, we are contentedly destitute of those secular advantages, without which, we apprehend, their cause would soon sink to the ground. We envy them not their *tithes* and *large revenues*. Though our subsistence is meaner and more precarious, yet 'tis the more satisfactory to us, because it

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comes

Serm. I.

Serm. I. comes in just the same honest way it did to the apostles and first ministers of the christian church.

We repine not, that we have no *spiritual courts* (as they call them) to inforce our discipline with a temporal power. If the authority of Christ will not make men regard us, we own we are not dispos'd to drive a trade in *excommunications and absolutions*, which yet (I promise you) is like to prove a very profitable one, as soon as ever the people can be enslav'd into the belief of the priests absolute power of forgiving sins. And while our consciences are clear, and testify we have not at the hands of men deserv'd them, we glory in the hardships formerly or lately laid upon us. *We take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.* We hope we have in all things *ap- proved our selves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in imprisonments, in tumults, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known.* And since such things are suppos'd to inhanche and embellish the character of a minister, we take the liberty to say of our adversaries, *Are they ministers of Christ? we are more.*

2. If the success of any ministry is an evidence of the goodness of it; this may very well be applied to those in the ministry; and may serve to direct them in their aims, and quicken them in their indeavours. Let us, my brethren, make it our chief aim to form our hearers to the mind and will of Christ. In what pain was this great apostle of the *Gentiles* for the success of his ministry. *My little children*, says he to the *Galatians*, of whom I travail again in birth, until Christ be form'd in you. He tells his *Corinthians*; he was

2 Cor. xii.
10.

2 Cor. vi.

4, 5, 8, 9.

Gal. iv. 19.

2 Cor. xi.
2, 3.

jealous

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jealous over them with a godly jealousy, because he had espoused them to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ: But he now fear'd, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve thro' his subtilty, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. So earnestly intent was he upon this design, that he gave himself wholly to the preaching of the gospel, as the most likely way to promote it; and therefore left the work of baptizing, as an inferiour part of his office, to others, and thanks God he had baptized very few among the Corinthians, lest any should say he had baptized in his own name; that is, lest any should say he was setting up a little faction or party of his own, and debasing the institution of Christ (as we see men do) to advance it. He tells us expressly: *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*, i. e. He sent him not so much to baptize as to preach. This was his chief work, and therefore he applied himself most industriously to it. A very different temper certainly his was, from what appears in some men, who, were it not for us, and to prevent their peoples coming after us, would not care how little they preach'd the gospel; but as for baptizing, Oh! by all means, they would ingross it to themselves; and rather than fail, they will do it where 'tis wholly needless, having been done before; and so they make Christ's ordinance serve to list men into, and promote the little interest of their own sect. So ambitious are they of doing that, of the design of which this apostle could not imagine himself suspected without the utmost indignation and abhorrence. But I must do this angry generation (who have lately begun this practice) the justice, as to own they now begin to treat both sacraments impartially, and with equal reverence; for the other sacra-

Serm. I.

1 Cor. i. 14

ver. 17

Serm. I. ment has been vilely prostituted by them for a long time. But let us, my brethren, follow the example of this blessed apostle, and lay out our care, in the first place, upon the great and essential matters of our holy religion. Let us preach

Col. i. 27, *Christ, the hope of glory, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Herein also let us labour, striving according to his working in us.* Let us earnestly endeavour to convert sinners from the error of their ways, and to confirm, establish, and improve the saints. And in order hereunto, let us fervently implore the aids of the divine spirit, who alone can crown our labours with success; and so write the laws of Christ upon the fleshy tables of our hearers hearts, as that they may evidently appear to be the epistle of Christ in our behalf. If we can obtain many such credentials, we may patiently bear the insults of our adversaries, and rest satisfied in the evidence we have, that our ministry is acceptable to God.

3. And now, in the last place, let me apply what has been said to you, who are our beloved
1 Cor. iii. 4. *charge.* You see, my brethren, *what trust, what confidence we have through Christ to Godward concerning you.* We can boast of many of you. Would to God we could say so of you all. We are griev'd, when we perceive that we labour in vain as to
Gal. iv. 19. *any of you.* We earnestly long, and travail as it were in birth, until we see Christ formed in you.

2 Cor. vi. 1. *And as workers together with God, we beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* We warn you, that you delude not your selves with a formal profession; that you think not an ordinary attendance on our ministrations is all you should look after. Our instructions will do you no good, if you will not by your selves seriously consider them, and turn them

them into importunate petitions. Pray then for Serm. I.
 the sanctifying operations of God's spirit, that
 he may *write the laws of Christ in your hearts.*
 Then shall you be *the epistle of Christ*, which we
 shall have reason to bless God for. We doubt not
 God has already done this in many of you, and
 we glorify God for your *professed subjection to the gos-* 2 Cor. ix.
pel of Christ. But this we wish, even your *perfection.* 13.
 We claim no authority, we desire no respect, 2 Cor. xiii.
 but for your benefit, which we would gladly ⁹
 adapt all our ministrations to; being earnestly
 desirous to do all things, *dearly beloved, for your edi-* 2 Cor. xii.
fying. And therefore *this we beseech you, brethren,* 19.
and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have 1 Thess. iv.
received of us scripture directions, *how ye ought* ¹
to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more
and more. We cannot be in any pain as to your
 opinion of us; for however we should not be
 ministers in the esteem of others, who avoid us,
 and condemn us, without knowing us; yet our
 ministry will be indisputable with you, who are
our work, and the seal of our ministry in the Lord.
 If we may find our ministry successful upon you,
 to increase all the graces of God's spirit in you,
 we shall think we approve ourselves the ministers
 of Christ, and shall be easy and patient under the
 censures and reproaches of unreasonable men.

Let me now therefore beseech, nay, require
 you all by the respect you profess to have for us,
 that you make your *profiting appear to all men.*
 Your other respect, whatever it be, will not satis-
 fy us without this: *for we seek not yours but you.* 2 Cor. xii.
 By this you will secure your own reputation as ¹⁴
 christians, and ours as the ministers of Christ a-
 mong you. We fear not the *sophistry* of our
 adversaries, which we have easily detected; may
 we but see our selves more secur'd with argu-
 ments from your conduct. Upon you therefore,

Serm. I. dearly beloved, we leave the *honour* and reputation of our despised ministry. See that you fairly and fully vindicate it, by demonstrating the usefulness of it, in the *sobriety, righteousness, and godliness* of your lives and conversations. You know that *well-doing* is prescrib'd as the ready way to *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*: and no doubt it will *stop the mouths of gainsayers*, or make them appear foolish and extravagant in their opposition. See then that you all walk *circumspectly, not as fools but as wise*. Exercise your selves *herein daily, to keep consciences void of offence toward God and toward men*. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. And giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.—And if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And then neither your not having episcopal baptism, nor your failing at your graves of having the kind and charitable words said over you, which use to be said over swearers, drunkards, whoremongers and thieves, shall be able to keep you out from thence.

These therefore are the things we intreat you to mind for your own sake, and for ours; and in these accomplish'd in you, we desire to rejoice both now, and in the great day. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye even in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at an

ORDINATION.

THE

P R E F A C E.

THE world is so well stock'd with sermons of all sorts, that I am sensible it has little occasion for any of mine. That which I lately publish'd, intitled, *An useful ministry, a valid one, had as much right as most to the common plea for printing sermons; the importunity of friends. But I knew, if the sermon needed an apology, the using such an one could do it no service, and might bring in the reputation of my friends to suffer together with my own: For which reason, I mention'd nothing of their request, either in the title page, or in a preface. 'Twas the unhappiness of that sermon to be misunderstood by some: And upon them I lay all the blame of the*

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world's being troubled with this. For to say the truth, the reason why I lately preach'd, and now publish this sermon, is not so much to gratify the request of friends, as to vindicate my self, and that truth which some were pleas'd to think I had relinquish'd.

Every one knows what a mighty stir our adversaries have made about ordination, confining the ministry to those who have a prelate's hand laid upon them, whatever the spirit is which rules in their hearts. Their way of managing the controversy about ordination, has been, what they would certainly have chosen, if they had design'd to puzzle the common people, rather than inform them. I was willing to let our people see, they have no need to trouble themselves about what they bring from fathers and councils : and that there is a shorter way of trying the pretences of episcopal and dissenting ministers. I am the better pleas'd with what I have suggested to our people ; because I have only follow'd the example of our blessed Saviour, who has directed his followers to discover false teachers by their fruits, without mentioning any thing of their mission.

Matt. vii.
15, &c.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits : Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruit ye shall know them. And without all doubt, this is a warrant to the people of England, to beware of a great part of those who would invalidate all our ministrations. For if loose-
ness

ness and debauchery ; unthankfulness to God and man for the greatest deliverances ; sowing strife and contention ; the stirring up to sedition, rapine and sacrilege ; the encouraging rebellion against the best of kings ; and the prevaricating both with God and man in subscriptions, prayers, and the most plain, express and solemn oaths ; if these, I say, are not fruits bad enough to prove men false prophets, and to teach us to beware of them, I can't conceive what use our Saviour's rule can be of. My design, therefore, being to teach men to judge of ministers pretensions by such a kind of rule, I purposely wav'd the whole business of ordination.

Some have overlook'd the nature of that Success I argued from, in the sermon, which is no other than the forming Christ in men, so as that they become the epistle of Christ. Some have thought the apostle could not prove his apostleship by success ; because then every successful minister would be prov'd an apostle. A short answer to which, and to other objections of the like nature, is sufficient : That success only proves men to be what they pretend to, and not what they do not.

But the greatest cause of my being misunderstood, is, that some of my readers have not distinguish'd between a valid and a regular ministry ; but imagin'd my argument was design'd to prove the regularity of a ministry by the success of it.

What my sentiments are of a regular ministry, and some of my reasons for my opinion, may be seen in the ensuing sermon. They seem very plain to me, and I am not without hope, they may be of service to such, whose prejudices are not so strong as to hinder an impartial examination. But however satisfy'd I am in the course I have taken, I cannot invalidate the ministrations of all those, who are of another mind ; nor would I venture to re-
baptize

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baptize persons, who had been baptized before by such as acted without that solemn ordination, without which I should not dare to act as a minister myself. And truly, when I observe how the apostle as it were begins his advice to Timothy, telling him, that charity is the end of the commandment, *Τὴν ἀγάπην*, either the ministerial charge, as the word is used; this charge I commit unto thee: Or the gospel in general; I say, when I observe this, I find my self much inclin'd to yield to the influence of charity, in judging of the validity of persons ministrations. Nay, I think, I am order'd to do so by that very comprehensive *1 Tim. i. 5.* *ver. 18.* *1 Cor. xvi. 12.* injunction: Let all your things be done with charity. 'Tis really shocking to me, because it carries in it an injurious reflection upon the goodness of God, to imagine, that he will merely for the want of a ceremony in a minister's ordination, omitted not through wilfulness, but mistake, damn him, though he has all the other qualifications of a minister, and damn all those who attend his ministrations, how christian soever their temper and conversations are. To such a length have the furious bigots of our time carried their uncharitable and wicked principles, invalidating the ministerial acts of all protestants but themselves, and disowning the christianity of all dissenters, and consigning them over, as a parcel of heathens, to the everlasting flames.

'Tis not easy to think these men believe themselves, when they assert, we are no christians. I am sure their actions evidently contradict their assertion, and fix upon them the charge of the vilest hypocrisy. 'Tis, I think, a certain truth, and never contested in the protestant world; that the discipline of the church only extends to the members of it; and that those who were never in it, are not liable by excommunications to be cast out of it. In former times it

used

used to be alleged, that baptism made persons members of the catholick church; and that the baptism administred by dissenters made men members of the established church, because that alone was the catholick church in England. And so the poor dissenters had it very gravely prov'd upon them, that they were members of the catholick church of England, and liable to her censures, &c. But after we were deliver'd from that oppression, and that occasional doctrine was render'd useles; they pleaded, we never were members of the catholick church. And yet those men who so earnestly contended, we are no christians, have of late been as earnest in striving to bring us into our former bondage to their spiritual courts; and were the contrivers of the first draught of the schism-bill. 'Twould be happy for us, if they would shew any consistency and sincerity in their treating us. If they desire to have us subject to their ecclesiastical courts, let them own, we are qualified to be so, by being baptiz'd members of the catholick church: Or, if they deny our baptism and our christianity, let them hearken to common sense, and the example of the primitive church, who never pretended thus to exercise discipline, and to censure and excommunicate persons not being of the church, and who scorn'd to receive any part of their maintenance from heathens, hereticks, or schismatics. Were it left to me to determine which of these two they should choose, I should certainly prefer the latter. The advantage of which is obvious; and the prejudice I should esteem inconsiderable. For tho' I heartily love all sober and moderate men of the establish'd communion, yet I should very little regard the ill opinion of the furious generation. For if they only are the true church of England (as they pretend) and the rest are of no church; I am sure the church must be in just such a temper as bishop Burnet speaks of

The PREFACE.

of in those remarkable words, which shall conclude
Apol. for this Preface, “ And I will boldly say this, that
the Chur. “ if the church of England, after she has got out
of England “ of this storm, [its danger in king James’s reign]
“ will return to hearken to the peevishness of
“ some sower men [in bearing hard upon the dissen-
ters] “ she will be abandon’d both of God and
“ man, and will set both heaven and earth a-
“ gainst her.

2 TIM.

2 TIM. II. 2.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

WHAT this apostle says of the creatures design'd for our food, that may we say of persons set apart to the sacred office: *They are sanctified by the word and prayer.* Every religious service is to be perform'd with prayer; and the most solemn prayer, even that which is join'd with fasting, is proper to accompany the separation of persons to the work of the ministry. So when *the Holy Ghost required Barnabas and Saul to be separated to the work, whereunto he had called them,* it was done by *fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands.* And in imitation of that example, we have set apart this day to such exercises, that we may the more solemnly separate a person to that work, to which we trust God has call'd him. Our business now is to recommeud him to the blessing of God in our prayers; and to initiate and authorize him in the name of God, to the discharge of all the parts of the sacred function, by that ancient sign of benediction, which was practis'd under both the old and new

Sermon
II.

1 Tim. iv.
5.

Acts xiii.
2, 3.

46 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon new testament upon extraordinary and solemn
II. occasions.

~~~~~ In the work of prayer, that is, the offering up earnest supplications to God for a blessing upon his person and labours, who is now to be set apart to minister in the church of Christ, and more particularly among you, I hope you are all heartily concurring. I am sure 'tis every one's concern, who designs to sit under his ministry, to do so. This you are daily to pray for ; and more especially should you do it now, that the united fervour of our hearts may give the greater force to our prayers, and render them the more effectual and prevailing for him in his entrance upon his work.

~~~~~ This then so far is your act as well as ours : but the authoritative separating and commissioning him to the work is not your act, but primarily the Lord's, and secondarily ours, acting in his name. And that you may see, we act herein according to the will of God, his word is now to be joyn'd with prayer. And having this part of the work devolv'd upon me, I shall endeavour to shew you the grounds and reasons of these our proceedings. In order to which, I have made choice of the words read to you. *And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* This direction relates wholly to the investing ministers in their office : As may be easily imagin'd upon a bare reading of the text, and will more fully appear, when we consider the several things contain'd in it.

~~~~~ It can't be an instruction to *Timothy*, how to deal with christians in general. An aptness to learn and practise is sufficient in them : But the  
ability



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 47

Sermon  
II.

ability to teach others, which he insists upon, shews he speaks of such as were to be intrusted with an office, even that office which Christ appointed in his church: *Who gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* But it is elsewhere represented as very absurd to suppose, that these things belong to all the members of the christian church. For that is plainly the meaning of the apostle's interrogation: *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?* I Cor. xii. 29.

This being premis'd concerning the design of the words in general, I shall consider these three things in them.

I. The qualifications requir'd in such as were to be admitted to the sacred office: They were to be *faithful men, and able to teach others.*

II. Who was to judge of their qualifications, and authorize them to the office. And that was *Timothy: The same commit thou.*

III. The account here given of the investiture or commission they were to receive. They were to have *those things committed to them, which Timothy had heard of the apostle among many witnesses.*

I. The qualifications requir'd in such as were to be admitted to the sacred office: They were to be *faithful men, and able to teach others also.* Whoever are suppos'd to have the power committed to them of judging, whether men are qualify'd for the office; these are unquestionably the qualifications they are to look after. And where there is a fair appearance of both the

## 48 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon the things mention'd, the text is a sufficient

II. warrant to set them apart to the office, if they  
 are willing to undertake it.

1. They must be *faithful men*. The word *faithful* in our own language, as likewise that in the original to which it answers, is used to express sometimes mens being *believers*, and sometimes their being *trusty*. I don't see, why we may not allow it here, to include both senses. I am sure, if one be principally design'd, the other must not be excluded, but suppos'd.

John xx.  
27.

1. This may import, that those who are admitted to the office should be *believers*. Thus the same word is used, when Christ's words to *Thomas* are related by the evangelist : *Be not faithless, but believing*. So we frequently read of the *faithful*, or the *faithful in Christ Jesus*, by which are meant *believers*.

Eph. iv.  
13.

The necessity of this is very obvious. That which is necessary in a private christian to give him a right in the sight of God to the communion of the church, must be much more necessary in a minister to qualify him to undertake the sacred office. Is there not a manifest absurdity in supposing this a needless qualification of a minister? What is the design of the ministry, but to instruct men in the christian faith, and to build them up in it, *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. Can you imagine any man fit to teach others that truth, which he believes not himself? Would you ever send a person to persuade another, of that which you knew to be disagreeable to his own opinion? You are sensible, though he should have such a command over himself, as to be able  
to



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 49

to dissemble his own sentiments, he would be very heartless in his attempt to convince the person you sent him to. And so 'tis in the case before us. He that does not believe the gospel himself, will not be very solicitous to make others do so, unless he is acted by some base and unworthy aims, and designs to make a gain of godliness.

Besides, faith is one of the main springs of a christian's life and motion, and has a special influence upon all he does aright in religion. This gives him the greatest encouragement in the discharge of his duty, while by faith he looks to the invisible world, and realizes the promises which God has made to those who diligently and faithfully serve him. This is the great means of his receiving supplies of inward strength for the performance of every good work, while in the exercise of it he has recourse to Christ, depends upon Him, and derives suitable communications from Him. For *the life he lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God: And Christ dwells in his heart by faith.* And if it be so necessary for an ordinary christian, it must be much more so for a minister, who may expect to meet with greater opposition from the devil and the world; and whose work, being more hard and difficult, requires more considerable measures of divine aid, in order to the right performing it.

Nay, unless men are *found in the faith*, that is, thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the gospel, they are very unfit for this office. The flock is apparently in greater danger of being infected with the errors of such, than with those of private christians. A grievous error in a teacher, may defeat the chief design of the ministry,

E

nistry,

II.

Gal. ii. 20.

Eph. iii. 17.

## 50 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon nistry, to build up christians in the faith ; and

II. may very much advance a quite contrary one.  
 Thus when Hymeneus and Philetus erred concern-  
 2 Tim. ii. ing the truth, saying, *The resurrection was already*  
 17, 18. *past, their word did eat as a canker, and they*  
*overthrew the faith of some.*

This qualification of a minister is frequently  
 commended in the scripture. The apostle insists  
 upon it as necessary in the lowest officers in the  
 church. The deacons, according to his directi-  
 1 Tim. iii. on, must be such as *hold the mystery of the Faith*  
 9. *in a pure conscience. A good minister of Jesus*  
 Ch. iv. 6. *Christ, in his account must be one nourish'd up*  
*in the words of faith and of good doctrine. He there-*  
*fore highly esteem'd Timothy, because he was*  
 2 Tim. i. 5. *persuaded the unfeigned faith, which dwelt in his*  
*grandmother and mother, was in him also. He*  
 ver. 13. *urges him to hold fast the form of sound words,*  
*which he had heard of him, in faith and love,*  
 1 Tim. i. *which is in Christ Jesus : And gives him this di-*  
 18, 19. *rection, in order to his warring a good warfare,*  
*that he should hold faith and a good conscience.*  
 And he speaks of this as a commendation of  
 Ch. ii. 7. his own ministry : *I am, says he, ordained a*  
*preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the gentiles*  
*in faith and verity.*

The apostles had the gift of *discerning spirits*,  
 and were able to know who were believers, and  
 fit for the ministry, and who were not. Nor  
 is it improbable, that so eminent a person as  
 Timothy might have the same gift. It is certain,  
 it was bestow'd upon others beside the apostles :  
 For, whereas the apostles had all manner of ex-  
 traordinary gifts of the spirit, this was granted  
 1 Cor. xii. to some who had not all of them. *To one is*  
 8, 10. *given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another*  
*the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to ano-*  
*ther*



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 51

Sermon

II.



their discerning of spirits. The apostles fix'd ministers in the churches by the help of this extraordinary insight into men, trying them by the spirit, as an ancient \* writer of those times testifies. And if Timothy had the same ability, without all doubt he used it in like manner. But none now upon the earth can pretend to this. They who convey the office may be mistaken, and appoint such as God does not. And they may do it innocently; for God only knows the hearts of men. All that we can go upon in trying and judging of persons in this respect, is their knowledge, profession, and the manner of their life and conversation. We can hear what profession men make; we are able, upon discourse and examination, to judge what knowledge men have of the christian doctrine. And this ought to be inquir'd into. Thus, when 'tis requir'd, that those who were to be constituted deacons, should hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, 'tis immediately added, And let these be first proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. I Tim. iii. 9, 10.

This then shews, what reason we have to require of such as are to be admitted into the ministry, a profession of their faith, and why that is made among us at the time of ordination. It seems not improbable, that somewhat like to this was practis'd in the ancient church. For then it was usual for the new chosen bishop to send letters with copies of the confession of their faith to such bishops as liv'd remote from them: The design of which was, that knowing what faith they profess'd, and promis'd to preach, they might testify their communion with them. It is not unlikely they would be as desirous to satisfy

E 2

\* Clem. R. Epist. 1. ad Corinth. c. 42.

## 52 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon satisfy their ordainers, as their brethren who liv'd

II. at a greater distance from them : And therefore  
 at the time of their ordination, used to make some  
 declaration of their faith. Certainly the copies  
 they sent abroad contained what they had declared  
 at their ordination, either in some confession pre-  
 vious to the imposition of hands, or in the sermon  
 made presently after, of which great notice used  
 to be taken. And I will venture to say this in  
 the behalf of our method ; that if a profession of  
 faith is to be made, I think 'tis very reasonable  
 it should be drawn up by him who is to make it.

Farther, as men are too often hypocritical in  
 their pretences, and profess that faith they are  
 strangers to, as appears by their contradicting  
 their profession by the notorious irregularities  
 of their lives ; we are not to be satisfy'd with  
 a bare profession, unless the faith men profess  
 is evidenc'd by a suitable and pious conversation.  
 And in this matter we ought to be very strict.  
 Ministers are to be examples to the flock, and  
 such things are not sufferable in them, as might  
 perhaps be in a good measure excusable in pri-  
 vate christians. There should be some singular  
 degree of perfection in him, who is to be an  
 example for imitation. Ministers therefore are  
 1 Tim. iii. especially requir'd to be *vigilant, sober, and of good*  
 2, 7. *behaviour, and to be of good report.* This was one  
 inducement to the apostle, if not to ordain Timo-  
 thy, yet to take him as his companion and partner  
 in travelling and preaching the gospel, *Acts xvi. 2.*

2. When 'tis requir'd, that such as are in-  
 trusted with the office should be faithful, hereby  
 is meant they should be *trusty* ; and it is com-  
 mon for us to use the word *faithful* in that man-  
 ner. Thus God is frequently spoken of as faith-  
 ful, where the same word is used. And thus the  
 apostle



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 53

apostle speaks of himself: *He counted me faithful,* Sermon  
*putting me into the ministry.* II.

There is a most awful and important trust committed to ministers. They have a trust lodg'd in them for God, and for the good of the souls of men; they had therefore need be faithful and honest in the discharge of it. Whence the apostle speaks in that manner: *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* Moreover, 'tis required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. The trust lodg'd in them as stewards, is to publish the whole mind and will of God, and they are oblig'd to be faithful in keeping back nothing from the people, that may be profitable to them. Of which faithfulness we have in the author of this epistle a noble instance and example; who thus appeals to the *Ephesians*, among whom he had preach'd: *Ye know from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which beset me by the lying in wait of the Jews; And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunn'd to declare to you the whole counsel of God.* And whoever keeps back any thing that is profitable, and does not publish the whole counsel of God, acts not the part of a faithful minister of Christ.

And as a faithful minister is to publish the whole counsel of God, so he is to publish that only; and not to mingle fancies of his own, or

## 54 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon preach the traditions of men, or in his preaching

II. make those things necessary which Christ has  
 not made so. The commission which Christ has

Matthew given his ministers, is to *teach people to observe*  
 xxviii. 20. *all things whatsoever he has commanded them:* And

he that goes beyond that, goes beyond his com-  
 mission, and is not faithful in his preaching.

The apostles therefore, who were faithful, kept  
 to this rule, and *did not* (as one of them declares

2 Pet. i. in the name of all) *follow cunningly devised Fables;*  
 16. as is too often done by men, who are designing

to make a gain of godliness, whereby they indea-  
 vour to set up themselves, and schismatically

rend the communion of the church. For who-  
 ever keeps not to the scripture as his rule, and

makes more necessary than Christ has done, takes  
 the readiest course to break the peace of the

church. And strifes and divisions are in this  
 case unavoidable, unless others will betray their

trust in not opposing such incroachments. Mini-  
 sters are intrusted by Christ with an authority

for the good of the souls of men: And they are  
 to use it faithfully *for their edification, and not for*

*their destruction.* And a faithful minister ought  
 not to part with that trust, which Christ has

committed to him. If he gives it up into such  
 hands as it does not belong to, or as will not or

cannot execute it, he betrays his trust.

And as he is not to part with his authority,  
 so nor is he on the other hand to stretch and

inlarge it, by claiming more than Christ has  
 given him. Christ has made his ministers stew-

ards to give his people meat in due season, to  
 dispense his gospel, and to use his appointed

discipline to enforce his laws and precepts: But he  
 has never intrusted them with a despotical power,

nor has he made his people subject to their  
 arbi-

2 Cor. x.  
 8 and  
 xiii. 20.



*Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.* 55

arbitrary laws and commandments, that they should be their slaves, and tamely crouch under all the burthens they will do them the honour to lay upon them. Christ expressly caution'd his apostles against this tyrannical disposition, however some men pretend to ground it upon his commission. *Ye know, says he, that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them:* (They rule their subjects with a high hand, and according to their own will and pleasure.) *But it shall not be so among you.* Christ has made his ministers rulers, but not arbitrary ones. He has given them a power to put his laws in execution; but not to enact any laws of their own, which are not subservient and necessary in order thereunto. The apostles therefore claim'd no such power; see how this apostle speaks: *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy,* q. d. "We pretend not to a power to dictate to you of our own heads, and impose upon you a necessity of believing what Christ has not assured us of, and given us commission to publish. We have no authority in controversies of faith, to determine what Christ himself in his life-time, or by his spirit since his departure, has not determined." The elders and rulers of the church are forbidden elsewhere to exercise an arbitrary authority; and to lord it over God's heritage.

1 Pet. v. 3.

Let me add, that ministers of the gospel have a trust committed to them in all those gifts, which qualify them for the ministry. These gifts are all derived from Christ, the great head of the church, as we are assur'd, *Rom. xii. Eph. iv. 1 Cor. xii.* And so there is a faithfulness requisite in a minister in the using them, for the

## 56 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon honour and service of the giver of them. And I

II. am ready to interpret those passages of the apostle, *Rom. xii. 3, 6.* to this purpose. For I say, *through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.* Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Where what we have render'd the *measure of faith*, and the *proportion of faith*, might perhaps be better render'd the *measure of the trust*, and the *proportion of the trust*; that is, that trust which God is pleased to commit to us. It being evident the apostle is there speaking of the diversity of God's gifts in those whom he imploy'd in his church; this interpretation seems not disagreeable: And the sense then will be, that men should not pretend to greater things than God has intrusted them with, but should faithfully serve him, according to their capacities, and the gifts he has committed to their trust. And thus it admirably agrees with the direction of another apostle: *As every man hath receiv'd the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.* And the seventy interpreters seem to have used the word in this sense, *1 Cor. ix. 22, 26, 31.* Where what they have render'd *ἐν πίστει*, our translation renders *in their set office*, but the margin of our bibles *in their trust*. And there being such a trust lodg'd in ministers, the apostle had just cause to say to Timothy: *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.*

1 Pet. iv.  
10, 11.

1 Tim. vi.  
20.

And



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 57

And all those who are approv'd of Christ in Sermon the sacred office, are thus faithful: They may, **II.** with the apostle, *thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who has enabled them, for that he hath counted them faithful, putting them into the ministry.* This they receive from Christ, together with their commission; *obtaining mercy of the Lord to be faithful.* And a noble commendation is given of ministers, when they are said to be faithful.

*1 Tim. i. 12.*

*1 Cor. vii. 25.*

*Col. i. 7.*

*and iv. 7.*

*Eph. vi. 21.*

*21.*

*1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.*

*1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.*

*1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.*

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## 58 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

**Sermon** lution to bear him above the fear of men, and

**II.** to make him steady in his duty; he promises but little faithfulness in the ministerial office; there is too much reason to conclude he will be bias'd by mean considerations in the discharge of his duty, and will want that impartiality and sincerity which are requisite in the character of a minister. Great regard therefore is to be had

to a person's reputation and good name, when he is to be ordain'd to the ministry. The apostles had respect to this, when they appointed the

**Acts vi. 3.** choice of the seven deacons: *Wherefore, brethren, say they, look ye out among you seven men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost, &c.* And this is required as a qualification of a person to be or-

**1 Tim. iii. 7.** dain'd: *That he should have a good report of them that are without.* And the condition is not hard and unreasonable; since an honest and truly christian behaviour will gain the praise and commendation of the very enemies of christi-

2. The other qualification which the apostle requires in persons to be ordain'd is, that *they be able to teach others also.* He that is to be admitted to the office must be *apt to teach.* A man may be faithful, and yet unfit for the office, as not having a sufficient ability to instruct others in the christian doctrine. Now here, I conceive such things as these are necessary.

**1 Tim. iii. 2.** 1. A very good degree of *knowledge* in that word and doctrine which they are to teach. The reason of this is evident: The office of ministers is to teach others, and certainly then they ought to have a degree of knowledge above the common sort, who are to be taught by them. And how will they be able to *declare* to their hearers *the whole counsel of God*, if they are not them-



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 59

themselves acquainted with it? I only speak Sermon  
now of a knowledge of the mind and will of II.  
God: For that is all that as ministers we are  
oblig'd to teach. We are with this apostle to  
profess no other knowledge among our people,  
*but that of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* The I Cor. ii. 2.  
knowledge which a minister has, which is no  
way subservient to this, is meerly ornament-  
al. The scriptures then are to be diligently  
studied by him who is to teach others: In  
these he is to be thoroughly vers'd. This ex-  
cellently fitted *Timothy* for the ministry, *that from*  
*a child he had known the holy scriptures.* The rea-  
son is plain, because by them he gain'd the  
most certain and useful knowledge, and was com-  
pletely furnish'd for his whole ministerial work.  
For *all scripture is given by inspiration of God,* 2 Tim. iii.  
*and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor-* 15, 16, 17.  
*rection, for instruction in righteousness; that the man*  
*of God (or minister of the gospel) may be perfect,*  
*thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works.* 'Tis true,  
a man may profit by a minister who is inferiour  
to himself in knowledge; because the profiting  
of a christian does not always lie in his gain-  
ing more knowledge than he had before, but  
in his being brought under a more lively sense  
and powerful influence of that truth, which he  
was well acquainted with before. And yet the  
ignorance or weakness of a minister will bring  
both his person and office into contempt. 'Tis  
therefore highly requisite that persons should  
be tried, and that an account should be taken  
of their knowledge and understanding in such  
things, as it is a minister's business to teach, and  
so they should be admitted to the office.

2. A good *persuasive way of reasoning* seems  
requisite to an ability to teach: That a man  
should

## 60 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon should have a dexterity to insinuate himself into

II. the minds of his hearers, by explaining and recommending things according to their true nature and importance. By this means he will be

able at the same time both to instruct and move those who attend his ministrations, which doubtless are the great ends of preaching. Besides, this will fit him for another useful part of his work ; the defending the truth against gain-

Tit. i. 9. sayers, whom he is by *sound doctrine both to exhort and convince*. We may expect the religion of the blessed Jesus, and more especially in its native plainness and simplicity, will meet with many adversaries ; whose opposition will chiefly be made against the rulers and governors of the church. And therefore 'tis very fit they should be furnish'd to refute and convince them.

3. This ability to teach requires a good measure of *skill* and *prudence*, that applications may be made to persons suitably to their respective cases. This teaching is to be taken in a large sense, as comprehending all the several ways of it, such as (beside the bare explaining the truth) reproving, rebuking, exhorting, comforting, &c. as there is occasion. There is a difference in the state of those under a minister's care : And as their office is appointed for the advantage of all, so the word is to be applied to the several cases of all : Neither sinners nor saints are to be neglected ; but the one should be awaken'd, and the other encourag'd : The weak are to be strengthen'd, and the declining to be rais'd : The several duties of rich and poor, of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of masters and servants, are to be inculcated upon them : Of all which we meet with good examples in the

scrip-



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 61

Scriptures. And certainly the doing this aright Sermon  
is a work of prudence. II.

With what solemnity is this press'd? *I charge* 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.  
*be therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,*  
*who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appear-*  
*ing, and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant*  
*in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort*  
*with all long-suffering and doctrine. And so again,*  
*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are* 1 Thes. v. 14.  
*unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak,*  
*be patient toward all men. Which I am ready*  
to think in that place does primarily relate  
to the rulers of the church, upon whom he  
afterwards lays that charge: *I charge you by* ver. 27.  
*the Lord, that this epistle be read to all the holy*  
*brethren.*

And as such things are so necessary, who can  
doubt, whether the training up persons in learn-  
ing is an excellent advantage to prepare them  
for the office. God does not now miraculously  
indow men with gifts, and therefore such helps  
cannot be unserviceable. A learned education  
must be a considerable assistance, where 'tis  
sanctify'd by the spirit of God; though with-  
out that the most learned will be unfit for the  
office.

4. A tolerable *elocution* at least is necessary in  
order to a person's being able to teach others.  
Whatever improvements a man has made in  
learning and holiness, yet a defect here will be  
such a hindrance to him, as will render him un-  
fit for the office. If God did immediately send  
and commission persons, he were to be depended  
upon for the redressing natural infirmities; as in  
the case of *Moses*, *Exod. iv. 10, 11, 12.* and of  
*Jeremiah*, *Jer. i. 6, 7, 8, 9.* But as this is not  
to be expected in our day, 'tis evident a regard  
should

## 62 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon should be had to this kind of ability and capacity of a person for the work of the ministry.

II.

II. I come now to consider; who was to judge of men's qualifications for the sacred office, and to authorize them to it. Now that was *Timothy*: *The same commit thou*. And this I the rather take notice of, that I may shew you the grounds and reasons of our practice; and that we have good warrant for what we do as ministers in this matter. And there is the more reason for my doing this, because our practice is oppos'd by two sorts of persons.

1. Some lodge this matter wholly in the body of the people.

2. Some lodge it only in a diocesan bishop. The first sort may be refuted by this text: And the objections of the latter from it, will admit of an easy solution.

1. With reference to the first sort I say, the inspir'd apostle lodges this in *Timothy*, a person in office, and so not in the church, or body of the people. 'Tis, I think, remarkable, that tho' the epistles to the churches are many more in number than those to particular persons in office (there being but three such in all) yet it is only in these latter any directions are given about constituting ministers. *Timothy* and *Titus*, persons in office, have it recommended to them, to take care that those who were ordain'd, should be so and so qualified: Why should nothing of this nature be suggested to the people in the epistles directed to the churches, if they were the conveyers of the office? I have not yet been able to meet with any tolerable answer to this objection against that scheme. You see plainly these epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, are to direct them



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 63

them how to behave themselves in the church of God, in the discharge of their office: For this end the qualifications of such as were to be appointed officers are set down; and they are required to be cautious in appointing them; *to commit these things to faithful men, able to teach others, to lay hands suddenly on no man, &c.* What can all this signify, if they were only to act in the churches name; and the church it self gave the ministerial office to whom she pleas'd by her choice; and Timothy and Titus had nothing else to do upon the choice, but immediately ordain (or rather testify the churches ordination of) the party chosen? If they were not to lay on hands suddenly, then certainly they were not to admit a person to the ministry, without being themselves satisfied concerning his qualifications, even altho' the church had actually chosen him: And how then can the people be the rightful conveyers of the office?

They, who are displeas'd with us, as claiming a greater power to ministers than belongs to them, build, I think, upon this as their main supposition: That the community or body of the church has receiv'd from Christ the power of the keys, or has the whole power of all administrations lodg'd in it self.

Now this seems not clear to me. For as the apostles were the *foundation* upon which the christian church was built, it is but reasonable to imagine the foundation was first laid before the superstructure was rais'd; and that their office was appointed, and their commission given them before the christian church was properly form'd: For it was presently after gather'd by them. And if Christ designed to lodge such a power in the body of the people, it will seem strange,

## 64 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon II. strange, that when he appointed the first officers of his church, (for the date of the apostles full power as rulers in the christian church must be from the commission Christ gave them after his resurrection) he should take such particular care, that none of the people should be present, and that he might speak to none but the apostles, whom he constituted his ministers, and the rulers of his church, and who most certainly receiv'd not their power from the people. This is not a matter to be slightly pass'd over, now the enemies of the ministry boldly assert, that the promise given the apostles, together with their commission, *Lo I am with you always to the end of the world*, as much belongs to the people as to ministers.

Matthew  
xxviii. 20.

I would not be misunderstood, as claiming more for ministers than is their due. I don't say, the same thing is not promis'd to all the faithful members of Christ's church: 'Tis certain 'tis elsewhere in scripture; nay, and 'tis imply'd here. For if Christ is with his ministers to assist and succeed them in their office, he must be with his people too. But this I assert; that those words of Christ are a promise of his special presence with faithful ministers, and belong only remotely, and by consequence to the people. For if it be made evident, Christ joyn'd not the people with the apostles, I can't think any one will doubt that the promise is not only to the apostles, but their successors. The expression of being with them always to the end of the world, manifestly carrying it beyond the days of the apostles themselves. For I can't persuade my self that any sensible person will be mov'd by the criticism of rendring the *Συντελεία τῆς αἰῶνος*, not *the end of the world*, but *the end of the age*, since the

ex-



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 65

expression is so constantly us'd by the same evan-  
 gelist for *the end of the world*, Mat. xiii. 39, 40, 49.  
 and xxiv. 3. There's one text may be objected  
 against what I assert concerning this expression  
 of *συνέλευα τῶν αἰώνων*, that it always signifies *the*  
*end of the world*: And that is Heb. ix. 26. But now  
 once in the end of the world, ἐπὶ συνέλευσιν τοῦ αἵματος,  
 hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of  
 himself. But I answer; there is a difference be-  
 tween συνέλευα τῶν αἰώνων, and συνέλευα τοῦ αἵματος.  
 Mr. Joseph Mede has taken notice of this, and ac-  
 cording to the distinction he observes is made in  
 the stile of the scripture, when the end, or termi-  
 nus of time is meant, 'tis express'd in the singular  
 number: So ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα, John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54.  
 and xi. 24. ἐσχάτῃ καυρῶς, 1 Pet. i. 5. But when a  
 continuation or longer space of time is signified,  
 then the plural number is us'd. So ἐσχάτοι χρόνοι,  
 1 Pet. i. 20. ἐσχάται ἡμέραι, Heb. i. 2. 2 Tim. iii. 1.  
 Acts ii. 17. ὕστεροι καιροί, 1 Tim. iv. 1. Nor can it  
 be objected here, that according to this observa-  
 tion the text should be ἐπὶ συνέλευσιν τοῦ αἵματος.  
 'Tis sufficient without expressing both in the plu-  
 ral. So ἐπὶ ἐσχάτῃ τοῦ αἵματος ἡμέραν, 2 Pet. iii. 3. I shall  
 therefore only shew, the people were not join'd  
 with the apostles in the first making of the pro-  
 mise. And this, as I said, appears by the care  
 our Lord took, they should not be present at the  
 making of it. Thus just before our Saviour's  
 coming and giving the apostles their commissi-  
 on, 'tis expressly taken notice of: *Then the eleven* Matthew  
*disciples went away into Galilee.* Now this was xxviii. 16.  
 no casual thing, but by the special direction and  
 appointment of Christ. For this being a matter  
 of special importance, our Lord's heart was  
 much set upon it, and therefore before his Death  
 he made the appointment of this very meeting of

## 66 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon his apostles. 'Twas to them, and them only, he

II. so spake: *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.* Nay, and it seems proba-

Matthew ble by the evangelist's expression, that he had  
xxvi. 32. appointed the particular mountain, where he

Matthew would meet them. *Then the eleven disciples went  
xxviii. 16. away into Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had*

*appointed them.* Who can doubt the reason of this was the business he intended to meet them about; viz. the giving them their commission?

Nay, and not content with this appointment before his death, he is remarkably careful to remember them of it after his resurrection, that they might not fail of meeting him there. For

ver. 7. this reason, first an angel sends them word of it. *Go quickly, tell his disciples, he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, Lo! I have told you.* So likewise

Mark xvi. in the parallel place, *But go your way, tell his dis-  
7. ciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: There shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*

Matthew And then presently after Jesus himself appears to  
xxviii. 10. send the same message unto them, *Go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.* So that I take it to be a great mis-

take of a late learned commentator; that he supposes, it was at this time Christ appeared to the five hundred brethren at once. It could not be at this time, since Christ's care was so remarkable that all his apostles, and none else, should be present. 'Tis evident therefore, the promise was peculiar to them; and to them, and not to the people, was that commission given, which was to last to the end of the world.

And if we look into the history of the apostles management, we may learn from thence how they understood that commission. They, or such



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 67

such as were ordain'd by them, always constituted persons officers in the church. We read of the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, but never of the laying on of the hands of the people: Nor do I find the least intimation, that the apostles acted in the peoples names when they ordained ministers, nor is there any prescription given to *Timothy*, *Titus*, or any other ministers of the gospel to do so.

There are two arguments which are urged in favour of this opinion, which I shall briefly consider.

I. The first is taken from *Acts* xiv. 23. *And when they had ordained them elders*: Which our brethren pretend should be rendered, *When they had ordained them elders by the suffrage of the people*. And therefore, say they, the ordination was the peoples act, being perform'd by their vote or suffrage.

In answer to which let it be consider'd, who were here the ordainers, viz. *Paul* and *Barnabas*; whether there were any suffrage of the people, these persons ordered the affair. But farther; though the word *χειροτονειν*, is sometimes used by *Greek* authors in the sense insisted upon, and the etymology of it certainly refers to the common way of peoples giving their suffrage or vote among the *Greeks* by lifting up the hand; yet 'tis usual for words in tract of time to vary in their signification from their etymology: And so this word is very frequently put for constituting or appointing in general, without regard to any suffrages given by the people. And thus we find its compound is used by this same writer: *Him* *Acts* x. 40, *God raised up the third day, and shew'd him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God* ( *οὗτοι χειροτονημένοι εἰς τὸ θεῶν* ) *even to us who*

## 68 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon *did eat and drink with him after he was risen from the dead.* And sure none will think the apostles were chosen by suffrage; although it's certain *οἱ λαοὶ ὁμοῦ* as much refers to the peoples suffrages as does the other.

And that this criticism is too weak to support the opinion I am arguing against, may appear by comparing another place of scripture, where ordination is spoken of, and it is made the act of Titus without any the least hint of the suffrage of the people. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou mightest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (καταστήσεις) elders in every city, as I appointed thee.* I see not therefore any evidence, that the power of making or ordaining ministers is committed to the people. And that is the only thing I argue against, having no inclination to dispute their liberty of choosing them. I am absolutely against ministers lording it over God's heritage, and their imposing a particular minister upon a people without their approbation. And since the extraordinary gift of discerning spirits is ceas'd in the church, and none can now pretend to act by an immediate revelation in this matter, I think it unreasonable, people should be depriv'd of their liberty of refusing any person propos'd to them. This they always had in the ancient and purer times of the church, as every one must acknowledge who knows any thing of church history. They who boast so much of their conformity to the primitive church will not easily find any thing therein of the rights of patronage. This is founded upon acts of parliament, an agreeable rule enough for a parliamentary church: But has not the least countenance from the holy scriptures. I dispute not therefore against the peoples being interested in the choice of

Tit. i. 5.



*Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.* 69

of their ministers: But only argue that their choice conveys not the office; that the judging of mens qualifications, and ordaining them, belongs to such as God has call'd to the sacred office; such only being required to ordain elders, and to be careful not to lay hands suddenly on any man, and to commit the office to faithful men, who were able to teach others.

II.

2. The other objection I shall take notice of is; if ministers are the conveyers of the office, then what shall the people do, when ministers are themselves profligate and vile, unfit for serious christians to hold communion with, and resolv'd to ordain none but those of their own stamp? Or what shall a parcel of christians do, if by the providence of God they are cast upon some desolate island, where they can have no access to ministers? If they must have the ordinances of Christ, they must have ministers; if they must have them, they must make them, since they can take no other way to have them.

I answer; this is not a fair way of arguing, from extraordinary cases to ordinary. For it must be held always for certain, that the substance always takes place of a circumstance and ceremony; and that a command about the means must not hinder the observing a greater command about the end. Here's an absolute command to worship God, not to join in idolatrous worship, &c. This command must of indispensable necessity be observ'd; and when the command about the means, that are ordinarily necessary to that end, cannot be observ'd, yet still the great thing injoin'd (to which the other only is a means) is not to be neglected. So that here persons give way to necessity, and do that which they would not, if they could use ordina-

## 70 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon ry regular methods: And without all question  
 II. the ministrations of such persons would be every  
 way just and warrantable. But what is this to  
 the ordinary case of the church? Or how can  
 such cases be a rule for them? Is it not necessary  
 the command about the end and the means should  
 be both observ'd when they can?

Let me shew you the weakness of this way of  
 arguing, by giving you an example of it in ano-  
 ther instance or two. You know Christ has ap-  
 pointed in his supper the use of bread and wine;  
 suppose now it should be argued the wine is not  
 necessary, but we may use ale, or any other such  
 liquor instead of it; and this reason should be al-  
 leged, that christians, if they were cast upon  
 an island where they had no wine, might make  
 use of any other, the best, liquor they had, in the  
 administration of the ordinance, rather than ne-  
 glect to celebrate the memorial of Christ's death;  
 and therefore since it might be used then, it  
 might likewise at any other time, when wine  
 might be had. Would not every one see the  
 weakness of the argument? And is not the case

\* Since the writ-  
 ing this,

there accidentally fell into my hands a MS. life of Mr. *Nicholas Leverton*,  
 of *St. Tudy in Cornwall*, drawn up by Mr. *Charles Moreton*, which gives  
 so exact an account of the like case to that I have mention'd, and that  
 in the objection, that I can't but think it worth transcribing: "Two  
 English men were left on the backside of *Cuba*, where they continued  
 above a year, and saw no man but each other: Their food was po-  
 tatoes and fruits. — One of them, when he went to land, had a  
 bible in his pocket, and this they read very much. In reading  
 and discoursing about the Lord's Supper, they fell into consideration,  
 whether one of them might not (in their circumstances) administer  
 that ordinance? They concluded in the affirmative; and so with wa-  
 ter instead of wine, and potatoes instead of bread, they solemnly per-  
 form'd it; and (as they affirm'd) found much comfort and establish-  
 ment thereby. Yet afterwards when they return'd, they found a  
 scruple of conscience about the matter, and propos'd it to divers mini-  
 sters." And, if I mistake not, to Mr. *Leverton* himself.



*Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.* 71

*Israelites* to keep the fire continually burning on the altar, which he at first miraculously kindled, and he oblig'd them to use that in consuming their peace-offerings, &c. Now if this were a just way of reasoning, how easy would it have been for the priests to have then argued: It is very possible this fire may happen to be put out: Some foreign enemy may invade us, destroy the altar, and carry away both priests and people, and this fire be wholly lost, must it then for ever after be utterly unlawful to use any other fire? And must all sacrificing then cease! Since then in such a case it were lawful to use other fire, why may we not make use of it now or at any time? The case I have here put into the supposition is what afterward actually happen'd, and the *Jews* themselves acknowledge they lost the fire from heaven at the destruction of the first temple, and had it not in the second, and therefore were forc'd to make use of other, and they were innocent in doing this in a case of necessity, when the sacred fire could not be had; as they would not have been, if they had taken that liberty while that fire was kept burning; as *Nadab* and *Abihu* found to their cost, although the argument might as plausibly have been urged by them as in the present case. I think therefore, I may conclude there is no strength in these objections, and that the committing the office to persons, belongs to those who are themselves in office.

2. There are others who oppose us in claiming the power of ordination, pretending it belongs not to us, but to persons of an higher order. Their notion is this: That there is one sort of ministers, who have a power of reading prayers and homilies, of preaching and administering sacraments,

## 72 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon craments, but have not the power of ordination

II. and government committed to them. They say  
 this belongs to one single person in every church,  
 that is, in every diocese, which often compre-  
 hends in it a vast number of congregations, not  
 in the same city or town, but very distant from  
 one another. Thus, for instance, we have one  
 prelate in *England*, whose diocese (that is, whose  
 church, wherein he is supposed to have the sole  
 power of ordination and government) not only  
 contains in it several hundred parishes in *England*,  
 but likewise extends to all our colonies in both  
 the *Indies*. One would think the bare relation  
 of such an opinion were a sufficient exposing it,  
 and that it should not need any solemn confutati-  
 on. A man must have a more than ordinary  
 measure of credulity, who can believe this to be  
 according to the institution of Christ, and the  
 platform which obtain'd in the primitive church.  
 If I did not plainly perceive the motives, I should  
 be astonish'd to behold such a constitution made  
 the subject of so much admiration and triumph.  
 'Tis strange men can vindicate this, and yet at  
 the same time condemn the pope (as protestants  
 with good reason use to do) for undertaking an  
 impossible thing, in assuming to himself to be the  
 pastor of all the churches in the world.

Our question now is ; whether Christ has him-  
 self, or by his apostles, instituted one office,  
 which has the power of preaching and admini-  
 string sacraments without the power of ordaining  
 and governing ; and another, wherein both pow-  
 ers are vested in the same persons ; or whether in  
 every diocese there is only one person who has  
 the power of ordination and government, and  
 that all other ministers therein have not that  
 power. This we absolutely deny, while our ad-  
 versaries



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 73

versaries with great earnestness would obtrude Sermon the belief of it upon us. How little there is of II. scripture to establish such an opinion, is evident by the arguments they are pleased to use in the controversy.

Their greatest argument is fetch'd from *Timothy* and *Titus*. *Timothy* they say was bishop of *Ephesus*, and *Titus* of *Crete*; and these had the sole power of ordination and government in their respective churches; and that is the reason why such particular directions, as that in the text, are given to them, and they are requir'd to ordain, and to look after the qualifications of the persons to be ordained, and to receive accusations against such as were ordained, &c. This (as they assert) plainly shews, *Timothy* and *Titus* were superior to ordinary presbyters, and consequently they alone, and not the presbyters, had the power of ordination. Now the prelates, say they, are the only successors of *Timothy* and *Titus*; and presbyters are of another order, the successors of such as were ordained by *Timothy* and *Titus*, and therefore the prelates only have the power of ordination and government. I will comprehend my answer to this argument in these following particulars.

1. We grant *Timothy* and *Titus* were superior to other ministers; but then we assert, they had no successors in that wherein they were superior to them. 'Tis certain, *Timothy* was an evangelist, and therefore requir'd to do the work of one: *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions,* <sup>2 Tim. iv.</sup> *do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.* Had he been inferior to the evangelists, 'twould have been as improper to call upon him to do the work of one, as it would be to call upon a common presbyter to do the work of his dio-

## 74 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon diocesan. 'Tis a plain case, the evangelists were

II. not ordinary and common ministers, but of a superior character. The order in which they are  
 Eph. iv. set down sufficiently evidences this: *And he gave  
 11. some apostles: and some prophets: and some evangelists: and some pastors and teachers.* Apostles therefore, prophets and evangelists, are superior to pastors and teachers, and yet 'tis of that rank only our diocesan bishops are pretended to be.

It seems plain to me, that all those persons, who were superior to pastors and teachers, had a double character: That which was ordinary and standing in the church; and so they were all presbyters or bishops, for these are the same in scripture, our adversaries themselves, many of them, being judges: Their other character was extraordinary and peculiar to them, not design'd to be transmitted to any successors. 'Tis therefore to no purpose to argue from the superiority of apostles and evangelists to ordinary ministers. We own they were superior; their extraordinary gifts necessarily made them so: But what does this signify to such as appropriate the name of bishops to themselves in our day? Whatever distinguish'd them from ordinary ministers ceas'd with them, and the other standing part of their character is common to every rightly ordained presbyter.

And certainly if the apostles themselves were not of such an order, as our modern bishops are pretended to be, neither could the evangelists be of it. Now had Christ design'd his apostles should be officers in his church according to the episcopal scheme, he ought to have appointed each of them to preside over some one church; for 'tis the standing maxim of that scheme; *There can be but one bishop in one church*: Whereas no

less



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 75

less than eleven, to whom presently after Christ's Sermon ascension a twelfth was added, were at first constituted, and for some time remain'd the rulers and governors of that church, having all an equal power and authority. So that the apostles were evidently in their ordinary capacity, presbyters; that is, such kind of officers as might be more than one in one church.

2. *Timothy* was never what they call bishop of *Ephesus*; and *Titus* of *Crete*. They resided there for some time to settle matters in those churches, and to put them into a good order; and so they did in other places, as *Titus* in *Dalmatia*; and *Timothy* in *Macedonia*, *Corinth*, and *Thessalonica*, and therefore they may as well be styl'd bishops of these. Farther, How could *Timothy* be bishop of *Ephesus*, according to the modern way of speaking, since we are sure there were other bishops to rule that church? Thus the presbyters are call'd: *Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops*. Where our translators have, contrary to their own way of rendring the word, translated it *over-seers* rather than *bishops*, prudently, without all doubt, considering it would sound odd to episcopal ears, that more persons than one in a church should be styl'd bishops, and have the government of the church committed to them as such.

There is no reason therefore to think *Timothy* was bishop of *Ephesus*. And indeed his being an evangelist, would make one ready to conclude, he did not fix his residence there: Since the business of such seems to have been to travel from one place to another; and to stay no longer at any particular place, than was necessary for the right settling the church in it.

3. What-

2 Tim. iv.  
10.  
Acts xix.  
22.  
1 Cor. iv.  
17.  
1 Thess. iii.  
2.  
Acts xx.  
28.

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Sermon 3. Whatever was the superiority of *Timothy* to

II. those he ordain'd, 'tis certain they were to have the power of ordination and government. Our adversaries grant these go together. Now that they had the power of government is plain by the apostles reasoning about their qualifications:

1 Tim. iii. *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*

4. 'Tis very improbable, that the apostle was now sending directions to *Timothy* how to behave himself as the bishop of *Ephesus*, because he seems not to have been at *Ephesus* when he sent to him, nor was he about to send him thither, but he actually calls him quite another way. *Timothy* was not at *Ephesus* at the writing this second epistle; as appears by *Chap. iv. 13.* *And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.* What need to mention this to *Timothy*, if he were then at *Ephesus*? He would not need notice of it if *Tychicus* were the messenger, by whom the epistle was sent: Or if he was set out before the writing it, he would come before the epistle, and the notice given would be too late to signify any thing. Of the same sending of *Tychicus* we read in the epistle to the *Ephesians*. But that ye may also know my affairs, and how I do; *Tychicus*, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. And had *Timothy* been then there, such was the apostle's love and affection to him, that he would not have fail'd to have taken notice of him particularly, and to have sent him a salutation. Besides, had *Timothy* been there, they would have

Eph. vi.  
20, 21.

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## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 77

have had less need of the comfort of *Tychicus's* coming. And 'tis as plain, the apostle was not sending any order to *Timothy* to go to *Ephesus*: For he sent for him to come to *Rome* to himself. *Do 2 Tim. i. 10*  
*thy diligence to come shortly to me.* 'Tis most probable *Timothy* was at *Troas* at the time when this epistle was sent to him; since he is desir'd, not to go and fetch, but barely to bring with him what the apostle had left there. *The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.* So that in this second epistle there can be nothing to establish his being bishop of *Ephesus*, but all the directions given him should rather shew that he was bishop of *Troas* than of *Ephesus*. ver. 13.

5. When the apostle gives directions in his epistles to *Timothy*, how to behave himself in ordaining elders, &c. the reason of his doing so is, because *Timothy*, as an extraordinary person, (*viz.* an evangelist) was to have the chief hand therein; but this does not imply, that none who were with him had the power of doing the same thing. Many think that when the first epistle was written, *Timothy* was at *Ephesus*, setting that church in order. And if we take that for granted, and therefore allow that particular directions are given him in the management of the affairs of the church; yet there is no reason to think he was to act alone, but that the other bishops of that church had a power to perform the same acts, and were to join with him; since they were, as I observ'd before, the governors of that church, and had been constituted so before that epistle was written. I never find any ordination in the whole new testament, which was perform'd by a single person; nor can I think any  
I such

## 78 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon such ordination would be regular. And if the

II. apostle had a hand in the ordination of *Timothy*, and he speaks of that, and not of laying on hands to give the Holy Ghost, when he says:

2 Tim. i. 16. *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands: yet, notwithstanding that supposition, 'tis certain he did not do this alone, but*

1 Tim. iv. 14. *had others to join with him. Neglect not, says he, the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. And therefore though Timothy as an evangelist, distinguish'd from other presbyters by extraordinary gifts, would have the chief hand in all ordinations, yet 'tis unreasonable to think he would ordain alone; since he could not but remember an apostle would not do so, but join'd the presbytery with him, at the time when he was ordain'd himself.*

Our adversaries here farther urge, that tho' the presbytery might join with *Paul* or *Timothy* in laying on of hands, yet they could not rightfully lay on hands alone. And this they pretend is evident from these directions so peculiarly given to *Timothy*, whereby he is requir'd to commit the things he had heard to faithful men, to lay hands suddenly on no man, &c. Why, say they, should he have this charge so peculiarly given to him, if the presbyters by their office had the same power? This shews that *Timothy's* concurrence was necessary, and that the conveyance of the office depended upon him, and that the rest could do nothing without him.

Beside what has been already said, I will shew you the weakness of this way of arguing, by trying how it will hold, when apply'd to another place of scripture: And certainly if it be

not



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 79

not just in the one, it cannot be so in the other: Sermon  
Now I very much mistake the opinion of our II.  
adversaries, if it does not lead them to condemn   
the same kind of inference from another text.  
The words I refer to, are those which Christ  
spake to *Peter*, when the rest of the apostles  
were present. *And I will give unto Thee the keys* Matthew  
*of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt* xvi. 19.  
*bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and what-*  
*soever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in*  
*heaven.* They may as well infer that what  
Christ there says to *Peter* was peculiar to him,  
and did not belong to the other apostles, be-  
cause Christ speaks so peculiarly to him, and that  
when the others were present ; as they can infer  
from *Paul's* speaking so peculiarly to *Timothy*,  
that the things he commends to him belong'd  
solely to him, and not to all the other presbyters  
of the church. And the case is really the same.  
For as *Timothy* would be among other presby-  
ters, so would *Peter* be among the other apostles,  
their *Speaker*, *Prolocutor*, or *Foreman* ; if I may  
make use of those terms, which are so familiar  
in our own language. He was the first or chief  
apostle, and before the apostles departed from  
*Jerusalem* to spread the gospel in the world, he  
was continually the mouth of the whole body  
of them when he was present. The same might John xxi.  
be said concerning Christ's command to him, 15, &c.  
particularly *to feed his lambs, and his sheep.* 'Tis  
a very general interpretation of the ancients ;  
that what Christ there says to *Peter*, he says  
to all the apostles. And so in like manner say  
I, whatever directions *Paul* gives to *Timothy*, he  
gives to all the presbyters who were with him.  
And there is full as much sense in the papists  
pretending from Christ's words, that *Peter* had

## 80 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon a supreme power of binding and loosing above  
II. all the other apostles, as there is in our adversaries arguing from *Paul's* words, that *Timothy* had a supreme power of ordaining and governing above all the presbyters who were with him.

6. The power of administering sacraments, the signs and seals of the covenant of grace; and more especially the power of blessing and sanctifying things, to represent, seal and apply the body and blood of Christ, is so very great, that it is not easy to suppose a greater power is lodg'd in any men, than what they have who receive this. There ought therefore to be clear evidence and full proof, that those whom Christ has intrusted with this power, have not all other powers whatever, which Christ has lodg'd in any of his ministers. But I must confess, I never yet could see any tolerable proof of it: **Nay**, they who are most concern'd to produce it, can't themselves agree about it; but run into a multitude of ways to confirm their opinion, which are very inconsistent with each other: And 'tis with much more solidity and judgment they confute one another's particular schemes, than they establish the great doctrine they strive to maintain. I hope upon the whole of what has been said, I may conclude, that as the power of ordination belongs to those in office, so it belongs to all those who have the office of preaching and administering sacraments committed to them. And therefore I proceed to the last thing I propos'd to consider in the words: Which is,

III. The account here given of the investiture or commission persons were to receive. They were to have those things committed to them which *Timothy* had heard of the apostle among many



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many witnesses. And here three things offer themselves to our consideration. Sermon II.

1. What was to be committed, viz. The things *Timothy* had heard of the apostle.

2. Who were these witnesses, among whom he had heard them?

3. What this committing these things does import?

I. What was to be committed, viz. The things *Timothy* had heard of the apostle. No doubt the things he had taught *Timothy*, were such as he was very industrious in teaching every where, and such as he inculcates upon *Timothy* in his epistles to him. This expression may take in these following particulars.

1. The doctrine of the gospel, and the great things of our salvation. The apostles were sent abroad to preach Jesus Christ, and represent to the world what he had done and suffer'd to save sinful men. This they perform'd with great application and diligence, *preaching peace by Jesus Christ*. The apostle had taught *Timothy* a form of sound words, that is, an orderly scheme of christian doctrine, which he requires him in this epistle to hold fast. This had been committed to him, and he was required to commit it to others. And the next words may be understood to refer to this: *That good thing which was committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost; which dwelleth in us.* Acts x. 36.  
2 Tim. i. 13.  
ver. 14.

2. This expression must comprehend the precepts of the gospel, together with their sanctions. *Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you*, says Christ when he sent forth his apostles. And so this will take in all the evangelical rules of life and conversation, and of religious worship, which the apostle frequently

G

recom-

## 82 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon recommends to *Timothy* in his epistles, ordering

II. him to *put them in mind* of them, and *charge* christians to *observe and keep* them. To which purpose we meet with many expressions. *These*

1 Tim. iv. *things command and teach : These things give in*  
 11. *charge that they may be blameless : Of these things*  
 Ch. v. 7. *put them in remembrance, charging them before the*  
 2 Tim. ii. *Lord, &c.*  
 14.

3. The things he had heard must comprehend the discipline of the church ; those directions he had given him for the right ordering and management of the church. The apostle had doubtless instructed *Timothy* in these things, before he sent him out to do the work of an evangelist ; however he now inculcates them again upon him, and delivers them in writing for the benefit of the church in all after ages : And he tells him, why he wrote these things to him, viz, *That he might know how to behave himself, as a pillar and ground of truth, in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.*

1 Tim. iii.  
 14, 15.

These were the things *Timothy* had heard : And it will not be amiss for us to take particular notice of whom he had heard them ; *the things*, says he, *which thou hast heard* of me. The apostles were capable of giving a sure rule both of faith and practice in all things, and therefore ministers were bound to receive what they deliver'd, and to teach it to others. The apostles themselves were sent forth only to teach what Christ commanded. They deliver'd no other rule to their followers, than they receiv'd from Christ, having his spirit to guide them infallibly into all truth. And this is the ground of that authority which their writings ought to have in all ages of the church. If they had publish'd only their own opinion, and had not deliver'd the mind



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 83

mind of Christ, they would not have deserv'd the regard which has been paid them. But they *had the mind of Christ*, and could prove by the miracles they wrought, they deliver'd nothing but his mind. Hence this apostle charges Timothy: *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assur'd of, knowing of whom thou hast learn'd them.* The apostles gave a certain and infallible testimony of the truth of the things they deliver'd; so that persons might be assur'd thereof, knowing they learnt them of persons divinely taught and guided. And upon that account is their word a sure rule to all christians, who are oblig'd to be mindful of the commandments of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour. It belong'd therefore to them to speak with such authority as other ministers can't, except they have the written word clearly warranting them. See how this apostle speaks to Timothy: *I charge thee therefore in the sight of God, who quickneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, irrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* No regard is to be paid to the commands of ministers, who have not an infallible authority to back them. We are no farther to obey ministers, than we can see reason for their injunctions. The reason why the apostle expected to be obey'd by the Corinthians was, because he received of the Lord what he deliver'd to them. And we are bound to hearken to men in all such things, as they can shew us they have receiv'd of the Lord. But when they bring us things which they have receiv'd of fathers, councils, convocations, or the civil magistrate, and would from thence prescribe us a rule how to worship God, we beg their excuse,

II.

<sup>1</sup> Cor. ii.

<sup>16.</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Tim. iii.

<sup>14.</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Pet. iii.

<sup>2.</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tim. vi.

<sup>13, 14.</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cor. xi.

<sup>23.</sup>

## 84 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon 'till they shew us some better authority for

II. their commands. We are sure we have just reason to inquire, *Whence are these things? Are they*

Matthew  
xxi. 25.

*from heaven, or of men? If they pretend they are from heaven, we will gladly receive them, as soon as they will vouchsafe to prove them to be so:*

But if they say they are *of men*, we desire them to rest contented with this short answer: That

Matthew  
xxiii. 10.

*we have one master, even Christ: And in these things call no man master upon earth.*

2. Who were those many witnesses among whom *Timothy* had heard the things here refer'd to. A learned gentleman thinks no witnesses are here spoken of, and by altering the pointing of the sentence and a single accent, renders the words to this purpose: *The things which thou hast heard of me at large, testifying them, commit them, &c.* But since our own rendring may be defended, and these witnesses seem mention'd elsewhere by the apostle, I see no necessity of our embracing that ingenious conjecture.

Some then by the witnesses understand not any persons, but only such things as attested the truth of the christian doctrine, particularly the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles. Others think hereby may be meant such persons as confirm'd the truth which *Timothy* had heard. And so these witnesses may be the apostles who were Christ's *chosen witnesses* to the world. These were many, abundantly sufficient to attest the matters they declar'd themselves eye-witnesses of. And with them then may be joyn'd all those who had seen Christ after he was risen from the dead, and so were witnesses of his resurrection, a most eminent proof of his doctrine: And they, you know were many: For *he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.*

I Cor. xv.  
6.

But



*Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.* 85

Sermon

II.

But I cannot but prefer that interpretation, which makes these witnesses to be the persons, who were present, when *Timothy* heard those things from the apostle; to which he here refers. If this related to his preaching in general, then the witnesses must signify those who were his hearers at the same time with *Timothy*. But I can't easily persuade myself that this is his meaning. *Timothy* had been his companion in travel, and had convers'd with him frequently alone, and by that means gain'd a fuller information in divine things: And it seems not probable he would direct him to commit to others nothing but what he had learn'd of him in a publick audience. I conceive therefore, he here refers to some charge he had laid upon *Timothy* before many witnesses. And thus the mention of these many witnesses is of some considerable importance; which otherwise it seems not to be. I think then, as the apostle was now giving *Timothy* directions about ordaining men to the work of the ministry, so he puts him in mind of his own ordination. And 'tis as tho' he had said to him, " Oh *Timothy*, thou canst not but remember, what a charge I laid upon thee, when thou wast thy self ordain'd: What the things were which I injoyn'd thee then to teach and preach. There were many present, who were witnesses of these things, and can testify against thee, if thou hast forgotten them, or art not careful to act according to that strict command I then gave thee, and to discharge thy trust with faithfulness. And as thou art to constitute others in the same office thou wast then put into thy self; make the charge I then gave thee thy pattern, and the same things I committed to thee, commit thou also to others."

[G. 3.]

This

## 86 Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular.

Sermon This interpretation seems to be confirm'd by another place, where many witnesses are spoken of, whom I take to be the same with those in the text; the persons present at *Timothy's* ordination.

II. *1 Tim. vi. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast profess'd a good profession before many witnesses.* 'Tis reason-

able to suppose, this good profession he refers to was made by *Timothy*, either at his baptism or at his ordination: And since 'tis more likely the apostle was present at his ordination than his baptism (for indeed he seems to have had no particular knowledge of him, till he was commended to him by the brethren at *Lysra* and *Iconium*, tho' he was a disciple, and consequently baptized before) we have more reason to think he would refer to the profession made at his ordination, as a thing he was acquainted with, than that at his baptism, when he was not himself present. Besides, the exhortation he is here giving *Timothy* may well be understood to be directed to him as a minister, since 'tis the continuation of an exhortation begun in the preceding verse, which is addressed to him as *a man of God*, by which, I think, is generally understood a minister of the gospel. Now this *profession* then was made before many witnesses, who also heard the charge the apostle laid upon him. And it could not but have a considerable influence upon *Timothy* to consider, how many eyes were upon him; how many would observe it now, and be able to testify against him in the last day, if he departed from the solemn profession he had made, or neglected to behave himself according to the strict charge given him.

Acts xvi.  
1, 2.

I the rather mention this, that you may see, how very probable 'tis the apostles used pretty much



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 87

much the same method we do. However, 'tis not Sermon  
bare probabilities we ground our practice upon ; II.  
but somewhat of this nature is requisite, in order  
to our trying and forming a judgment concerning persons, when we commit the office to them.

3. What is the import of this expression : *Commit thou these things*. 'Tis evident this does not signify a bare teaching and preaching these things. *Timothy* was to do that to such as were not faithful, in order to their becoming such ; he was to instruct those who were not able to teach others. This therefore imports,

1. An authorizing and empowering persons, as ministers of the gospel, to teach these things, or the giving them a warrant to do so. Ministers treat with men in God's behalf, and act in his name, and therefore it is very agreeable they should be solemnly authoriz'd to their office. And those words of the apostle seem here very pertinent : *How shall they preach, except they be sent ?* And since persons are not now sent by Christ himself immediately, 'tis but reasonable to suppose the most just and regular way of their being sent, is when they are authoriz'd by those in whose hands that power is plainly lodg'd : And who they are I have shew'd you already.

2. 'Tis not a bare authorizing them, but a laying it upon them as a solemn charge and trust, a binding and ingaging them to teach these things. So that the very committing the things to them makes a great alteration in their circumstances, and leaves them under a strict obligation to do the work, as ever they would approve themselves faithful to God, and true to the vows and promises they made. *They are allow'd of God to* 1 Thes. ii.

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Sermon *be put in trust with the gospel, and therefore are to*

II. *speake, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth their hearts.*

And thus I have consider'd the several things propos'd from the words. I shall conclude with these three reflections.

1. Hence we may see what to judge of some persons, who refuse to receive their commission this way. If the method Christ has appointed is such as I have describ'd, then without all doubt the ministry of such is far from being regular. 'Tis hard to imagine the people should in every particular church be qualified to judge whether a man is sufficiently accomplish'd for the ministry, and therefore 'tis not easy to allow they are intrusted with an absolute power of conveying the office. And tho' it be unreasonable, unchristian and barbarous to confine men by temporal penalties to any particular minister; yet the instilling into the people such a conceit of their power, and especially the putting it in practice, not only threatens mischief in its own nature, but has been found by experience to be very prejudicial to truth and piety, and very destructive of all order and peace in the church.

2. Hence we may see what need ministers have of divine grace and help. The reason why care is to be used, that the office may be committed only to faithful men, is because faithfulness is so absolutely necessary in the discharge of the work. And the greatness of the trust, and the extent of that faithfulness which is requisite, may convince us how difficult a matter 'tis to be a faithful minister. This faithfulness must attend a minister in his studying, his praying, in secret, as well as in the congregation, in his preaching, in his exhorting, and especially in his admonishing, re-  
proving



## Presbyterian Ordination prov'd regular. 89

proving and censuring offenders. And when this Sermon is consider'd, who can forbear crying out with II. the apostle ; *Who is sufficient for these things ?* If we are faithful we may well say with him, *We have obtained mercy to be faithful :* And by the grace of God we are what we are. <sup>2 Cor. ii. 16.</sup> <sup>I Cor. vii. 25.</sup>

3. It hence follows, that the grace and help of God, whereby ministers should be made faithful, ought most importunately to be sought both by themselves and their people. 'Tis especially for the peoples sake faithfulness is requir'd in such as are to be ordain'd. Their profit and edification is not a little concern'd herein ; and therefore should they pray that God would make their ministers faithful. And I am sure ministers have need to pray in like manner for themselves ; not only from the regard they have to the welfare of their people, but from a concern for their own souls. Their own salvation depends upon their faithfulness in the ministry. And dismal indeed will their doom be, if through their unfaithfulness the souls of their people *perish in their iniquity, and their blood is required at their hands.* <sup>—xv. 10.</sup>

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The

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*The CURSE causeless.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

EXON, Jan. 30, 17<sup>16</sup>/<sub>17</sub>.

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The P R E F A C E.

**I**T will seem strange to some to meet with a sermon of mine upon this occasion. I never could see reason to think the sin of the day was a national one, that should oblige us to fast yearly so long a time after it. And the chief purposes to which 'tis generally apply'd, were never any incouragement to me to fast with them, or pay any religious regard to the day.

But it happen'd this year to fall on the day of our weekly lecture, when it was my turn to preach. I thought therefore it would not be improper to say somewhat in our own vindication, at a time when we were every where insulted and abus'd. The sermon was compos'd and preach'd without the least intention of printing it; but being earnestly desir'd by many of the hearers to let it appear in the world, I have given way to their importunity.

PROV.



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PROV. XXVI. 2.

*As the bird by wandering, as the  
swallow by flying ; so the curse cause-  
less shall not come.*

**T**IS the custom of his pretended holi- Sermon  
III.  
ness, the man of sin, once a year  
to curse us, among the rest of those,  
whom he is pleas'd to count here-  
ticks, in the most solemn manner, by bell, book,  
and candle. I wish his example was follow'd by  
none but those of his own church. But, alas !  
'tis sad to observe, how addicted furious and  
angry men are to love cursing, rather than  
blessing ; and with what pleasure some men  
thunder out their severe censures, and bitter im-  
precations against their innocent neighbours. And  
did they scatter their fire-brands, arrows and death,  
only when they were in sport, and over their  
profane cups, and in their merry meetings,  
their impiety would be far less than 'tis, when  
they attempt to sanctify their malice by bring-  
ing it into their worship, and venting it in  
the name of God himself. It has been for a long  
time the custom of many to fast this day in the  
year for strife and debate, and to smite with the  
first of wickedness. And we, all of us, are gene-  
rally represented as the vilest miscreants, and the  
abomination of God, with a design to inflame  
against

Sermon against us the hatred and vengeance of men.

III. And in this case, when the foundations of justice and charity are overturn'd, what shall the righteous do? Or, where shall they seek for refuge and comfort, but in the providence of the great God, who keeps the ordering all events in his own hand; and who will not intrust men with an arbitrary distribution of all the curses they would be as glad to inflict, as they are to denounce? *Vengeance belongs to him, and he will recompence. And there is no evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it.* Neither the rash judgments, nor the false representations, nor the cruel imprecations and threatnings of angry men, shall be able to hurt us, if we are secure of God's favour. A conscience void of offence will make us easy in our expectation of a blessing, when we are stunn'd with the loudest noise of cursing. For, as *Solomon* asserts in the text, *The curse causeless shall not come.* 'Tis upon this clause of the *verse* I intend to insist, for our encouragement and comfort on the present occasion. But the connection of it with the former part of the *verse* being obscure, and the latter clause having some ambiguity in it; I think it will be necessary to give some account, in the first place, of the general meaning of the words.

Heb. x.  
30.  
Amos iii.  
6.

In the *Hebrew* there is often a difference between the text and the margin, the *Cbethib* and the *Keri*: and translators take the liberty of following sometimes the one, and sometimes the other; and 'tis often hard to judge which is best, the *Jews* pretending both to be owing to the inspir'd writers. Thus it is in the last clause of the text, which, according to one reading of the original, may be render'd thus:



## The CURSE causeless.

93

*So is the curse causeless, it shall not come.* And according to the other reading, thus : *So is the curse causeless, it shall come upon him* ; that is, upon the person, who without cause denounces it. Now the meaning of the former clause of the *verse* will be different according as we fix upon the one, or t'other reading of the latter. If we read it, *As the bird by wandring, as the swallow by flying ; so is the curse causeless, it shall not come* ; the sense will be this : That the curse causeless is a wild and uncertain thing, as much at random as the flying of a bird ; that it as easily flies over our heads without doing us any hurt, as a bird does ; or, that it is as easily avoided by us, as a snare is by a bird that is upon the wing. But if we take the other reading of the words, *As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying ; so is the curse causeless, it shall come upon him* ; the meaning will be ; that as a bird by wandering exposes it self to danger, so does a man by causeless cursing of his neighbour ; the mischief falls upon himself. And we may observe, the wise man represents elsewhere the nest as a place of safety for a bird ; and speaks of it as expos'd to danger, by leaving and wandring from its nest ; *As a bird that wandereth from her nest ; so is a man that wandereth from his place.* Prov. xxvi. 8. Either of these senses is most just and true, and we need not to be solicitous which to prefer. I confess the latter seems to me more agreeable to Solomon's use of the comparison here mention'd. But then that sense implies the other. For if the curse falls upon him who denounces it, then it does not upon him against whom 'tis denounc'd.

In speaking therefore to the text, I shall,

I.

Sermon

III.



I. Inquire, when a curse may be said to be causeless?

II. I shall shew you, that the curse with which we are ordinarily loaded on this day, is causeless.

III. I shall endeavour to set before you the comfort which the text holds forth to you; that this causeless curse shall be mischievous, not to them who are cursed, but to the cursers themselves.

I. I shall inquire when a curse may be said to be causeless? Now there are four cases wherein a curse may be causeless.

1. When the pretended ground or reason of the curse is something really good and just; or, however harmless and innocent, and so there is no occasion for any cursing at all. The curse causeless is the curse which is undeserv'd; and certainly nothing can be more undeserv'd than a curse, when a man's actions are such as merit commendation and praise.

2. The curse is causeless, when though the occasion of it is evil, yet the evil is too inconsiderable to deserve such a curse as is denounc'd upon the account of it. There are degrees of evil as well as good; and 'tis not a man's being sure there is evil in any action, that will justify him in passing the most severe and rigorous sentence upon him who is guilty of it. A father, a master, or a magistrate would be very unjust, if he should punish every offence with equal severity. A proportion is always to be observ'd, and men are to be dealt with severely or mildly, according to the nature of the crime they have committed. And so far as the doom, or curse

men



men pronounce, exceeds the desert of the offence, Sermon  
so far is it without doubt causeless. Besides, the law of charity should teach us to make all the allowances we can, for those circumstances, which may alleviate persons guilt. Our common infirmities may, one would think, incline us to follow this rule. We often need our selves those charitable constructions, which our neighbours expect we should put upon their actions. And it would be hard and causeless to curse a person, as doing that wilfully and maliciously, which he did through mistake or inadvertence. This indeed can't be alleg'd in cases plainly and grossly evil, where every man's conscience must needs inform him: But without all question, great regard should be had to such circumstances in all intricate and disputable matters, wherein good men have been found to take both sides of the question.

3. The curse is causeless, when the person against whom 'tis levell'd is innocent, and had no hand in the occasion of it, however grievously evil and wicked it was. For in this case, though the curse may be deserv'd; yet 'tis evident, 'tis not by him who is cursed. And men should be as careful to acquit the innocent, as they are to condemn the guilty.

4. Then is the curse causeless, when the person who denounces it, is equally guilty with him, whom he curses. For whatever the crime is, yet he must with a very ill grace curse others for it, who has himself an equal share in the guilt. And he that curses another, for what he does himself, virtually curses himself. *Therefore thou* Rom. ii.  
*art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that* 1, 2.  
*judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest, dost the same*  
things.

Sermon *things*. And though the curse may not in this  
 III. case be causeless in it self; yet it manifestly is so  
 in the person from whom it proceeds.

I suppose there can be no difficulty in perceiving the curse is causeless in these several cases. I proceed therefore to the next part of my discourse,

II. To shew, that the curse with which we are ordinarily loaded on this day is causeless; and that our adversaries have no reason to abuse, revile, and condemn us at the rate they do, upon this occasion. And here I need only consider, how applicable those several things already mention'd, which shew a curse to be causeless, are to our case.

1. A great part of the matter of our charge, and the reason why we have such a heavy doom past upon us, is so far from being criminal, that it is truly noble, and deserves much praise and commendation. I speak now only of what was done by the parliament, and those who joyn'd with them against the king, or rather against his evil counsellors. As to what follow'd, when several of the members were secluded, and a few only were suffer'd to be present, and give their vote; I shall never reckon that to be the parliament's act. But a great load is thrown upon us, for what was the act of the parliament, and all the troubles of that unhappy time are ordinarily laid at our door: But the troubles were really owing to those, who put the king upon invading the rights of his subjects; and that brave parliament is worthy of an honourable and everlasting remembrance, who stood up nobly in the defence of them. All the world must own, it properly belong'd to the parliament to take notice of, and



to redress such grievances, as the nation then groan'd under. They are the fence and bulwark of our civil liberties, against the incroachments of an arbitrary power. The wisdom of our ancestors had provided, that parliaments should have an opportunity of looking into, and redressing the nation's grievances, by reserving to them the power of supplying the prince with money. And when there was no such law, as has been since made, for the frequent meeting of those assemblies, there was no other way to secure to the nation their privileges, but by a stiff defence of their right to refuse to part with their money, unless it was given in a parliamentary way. 'Twas this began those troubles, and all the world must justify that parliament, for standing up in defence of the right of the subjects; and taking the opportunity to redress the mischiefs, which were owing to as corrupt and vile a ministry, as ever had before harass'd the nation. And doubtless, while the parliament stood up in defence of the subjects liberties, it was the duty of the subjects to stand by them and defend them. And to that noble stand, that was then made in the days of our fore-fathers, we are indebted, that we their posterity are not a generation of slaves to the arbitrary power of our kings, and the lusts of such a vicious, fawning clergy, as then carry'd all before them.

2. Supposing the proceedings of the parliament and the nation (for I as yet meddle with no more) were in some respects evil and unjustifiable; yet were there such circumstances in their case, as must be allow'd to go a great way in excusing them, and should therefore lighten the censure men pass upon them. 'Tis indeed very hard for the best of men to manage a long quar-

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rel,

Sermon rel, that rises to a considerable height, without  
 III. deserving some blame. Though we allow there  
 were some things amiss in the conduct of those,  
 who stood up for the liberties of the people; yet  
 every one must see, their end and design was very  
 good, and that the methods they took were ge-  
 nerally so too. And this will go a great way in  
 excusing, even when it will not wholly justify.  
 If their jealousies and suspicions ran too high,  
 and if the terms they stood upon seem to have  
 been sometimes a little extravagant, let their  
 circumstances be consider'd. They had seen  
 what advances had been made to set up tyranny,  
 both in church and state; they had the massacre  
 of two hundred thousand of their brethren in  
*Ireland* before their eyes, and the threatnings of  
 the like usage were loud in their ears. And in  
 such a case, who can blame them, if they insist-  
 ed upon an extraordinary security? If their suspi-  
 cions were beyond the true designs of those they  
 had to deal with, they may thank themselves  
 who gave them too much reason to entertain  
 them. Our senators could not have been faith-  
 ful in the trust their country had lodg'd in them,  
 if they had not done their utmost to secure the  
 safety of the nation. And if it was a fault, 'twas  
 certainly a very pardonable one, that they  
 thought it much better to lay a restraint upon  
 the power of the prince, than to hazard the  
 utter ruin and destruction of the community.  
 And therefore, as to what was a national  
 act, that is, what was done by a free parlia-  
 ment at that time, posterity should, and I doubt  
 not in a little time will, judge more calmly  
 and impartially concerning it; and not load as  
 brave a set of men, as ever the nation had,  
 with their censures, for a conduct, which de-  
 rives



rives so many advantages and benefits to their successors. Sermon III.

3. 'Tis most evident, the curse which is usually on this day denounc'd against us, is causeless; because we are perfectly innocent, and had no manner of hand in the pretended occasion of their cursing us. Let the transaction of the day be as black and horrid as they please to represent it, what is that to us? What reason have they to raise such an out-cry against us upon that account? 'Tis now sixty-eight years ago since the thing was done; and 'tis a question whether there be any person left in the nation, who had directly, or indirectly, the least hand in the king's death? Is it not then causeless, for them to run out with so much intemperance and extravagance in cursing us, for a matter of which we are wholly innocent, and which was transacted, if not before we were born, yet at least before we were capable of having any hand in it?

*Obj.* 1. But, say they, if you had no hand in it, your fathers had, and the curse is due to you for your fathers sins.

*Ans.* The putting the king to death was the act of a very few; and the families who can in this respect be concern'd in it cannot be many. The act was far from being national, but was committed by a *juneto* of men, who oppress'd the nation, and enslav'd the parliament. And though they don't care to own it, yet they know very well, that the leaders of the people, the \* ministers at that time, earnestly, and with the hazard of their all in this world, openly protested against the fact, to the very face of them who did it. One would think, they who pretend to

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\* See Vindication of the ministers of the gospel in and about London, 1648.

Sermon embalm the memory of that king, should treat  
 III. those, who appear'd his friends at that time, with somewhat more of decency. If they were not able to save the king from death, yet they shew'd their good will to do it; and when they could do no more, through the domineering power of a few, they heartily protested against it, when we could tell them, who stood by without speaking a word in his behalf.

*Obj. 2.* However, say they, though you had not a personal hand in that fact, your principles are the same with theirs who had, you are all of you for destroying kings, and will gladly do it upon every opportunity, and therefore we justly charge you with the wickedness, and curse you for it.

*Answ.* 'Tis very much, I confess, we should have such bad principles as they charge us with, and not know it; and that they should be better able to tell us what our principles are, than we can tell our selves. Though such bold assertions may delude their easy followers, who receive them with an implicit faith; yet certainly it must be very hard for them to convince us, or indeed, any indifferent persons, that we don't know our own principles. If the law of the land has establish'd them as a church; yet, I suppose, neither that, nor the law of God, has establish'd them as inquisitors and searchers of mens hearts. This pretence of the badness of our principles, with respect to civil government, has been artfully play'd against us. Our schools have been represented as dangerous, and not to be allow'd. And who can doubt they must be so, if what they say be true? For why may not a man as well be suppos'd to teach, as to hold, base principles, without knowing any thing of the matter? But



if these inquisitors will condescend to us so far, as to give us leave to know our own principles, and allow us to be able to give a more faithful account of them, than they can do for us; we do not doubt to justify our principles against all the senseless clamours of those who would run us down.

We think it then our duty to live peaceably and quietly under that government, which the providence of God, and the laws of the land have set over us: That we are bound to be subject to it, and according to our stations to maintain it, so long as it answers its true end, without troubling our selves about the particular form of it. If we don't believe the unalienable, indefeasible right, or the *jus divinum* of kings, and an arbitrary government, they may thank themselves for it; since they never produce any sufficient charter for it, while they pretend to have one. In short, we distinguish between kings and tyrants; those who make the good of their people, and those who make their own pleasure, the rule of their administration. The former we think our selves bound in conscience to obey; and the latter, we should think we were great fools, if we did not to our power withstand and resist. Such are our principles, that no good king need, or ever did, distrust us: And we count it not a dishonour to us, that bad ones are always jealous of us; and we wish our adversaries did not, by endeavouring always to improve the jealousy of such, convince the world they are the only ones for their turn. If we don't compliment our princes with the promise of obedience without reserve; yet we think our selves bound to be subject to them in all civil things, while they make the laws of the land their standard. And

Sermon as to our consciences in religious matters, we  
 III. protest 'tis, and hope it ever will be our principle, to keep them sacred to the direction of a higher and greater prince, who alone has a right to prescribe to them. And he must be a bad prince with a witness, who will not be content with our rendring to him the things that are his; or, who will not allow us to render unto God the things that are God's.

As to kingly government in particular, we are unreasonably charg'd to be enemies to it. Men may fancy one government to be more perfect than another, and the world has always been divided in their speculations upon that head; but I believe we are all in general pleased with, and thankful to God for, such a monarchy as ours, which is so limited by the laws. So that we are perfectly innocent in the matter, for which our adversaries are so very free in cursing of us.

4. The curse which they denounce against us is causeless, since they who denounce it, are themselves the most guilty. I don't now run back to transactions, wherein neither we, nor they had any hand. I consider what is fresh in all our memories. Rebellion is the pretended occasion of the charge brought against us, and the high generation are the managers of it, who take upon them very solemnly to read our doom. But have they not now for ever stopp'd their own mouths? Will they blame us for standing up for our liberties, when we had the parliament, one part of the legislature, on our side; and yet think themselves innocent in inviting over the prince of *Orange*, to rescue their liberties, when they acted only in a private capacity? If the rights of kings are so unalienable, if their  
 per-



persons are so sacred, that they can never be resisted, but upon pain of that damnation which they thunder out against us on this occasion; what must become of them, who invited a prince to drive away king *James*, and join'd with him afterward in waging a war to keep him out? According to their notions, there was not a sword drawn, or a pistol fir'd against king *James* in *Ireland*, but what was a lifting up the hand against the Lord's anointed, and as truly a conspiring his death, as any thing they were ever guilty of, who actually put his father to death.

But to come yet nearer: Who were they that hatch'd the late rebellion, that took up arms against the best of kings, and that fought in the open field against him? Were any of those, they have been so long cursing as enemies to kingly government, and as rebels against all kings; were any of those their associates? Who were the generals, the soldiers, or the chaplains, in the rebellious host? They cannot pretend that his majesty, king *GEORGE*, had no right to the crown; we have their oaths to the contrary: And if we may not believe them when they are upon their oaths, I can't see why we should much regard what they say at any other time.

When therefore these men, according to their usual cant, reproach you with sedition and rebellion; request them, that they would please to explain themselves, whether they mean, those of *Oxford*, *Manchester*, *Birmingham*, *Bristol*, and other places they have made too many to be mention'd? Or, Whether they mean those of *Preston* and *Dumblain*? Desire them to oblige you with the names of the *Presbyterian* ministers, justices, generals, captains, and other officers; the *Presbyterian* soldiers, or mobs, that appear-

Sermon ed or acted upon any of these occasions. They  
 III. will soon be weary, if they attempt to give you  
 the characters of the actors in that villany; unless they will deny it to be such, because 'tis sanctified by the church, for whose sake they pretend it was design'd.

If, according to their usual custom, they twit you with 1641, without asking them, Whether they mean the murdering two hundred thousand protestants by their good friends in *Ireland*? you may tell them, You need not be at the trouble of going half so far back as 1641, to meet with 1715, or 1688; and that the church of *England* has, in these two latter, more than equall'd all that the *Presbyterians* did in the former.

Since then these very men are so notoriously guilty of that crime, for which they pretend to condemn us; the cursing us must needs be causeless as to them, if we had actually deserv'd it; as I have shewn you we have not. And they, of all men in the world, have the least reason to make such an out-cry as they do, with the infamous *Athaliah*: *Treason, treason*. But 'tis time for me to hasten to the last general head of my discourse.

2 Kings  
 xi. 14.

III. And I hope I have now, by shewing you, that the curse against you is causeless, prepar'd you to receive the comfort which the text may afford you; which is according to the different readings, either, *it shall not come*; or *it shall come upon him* that denounces it, and be most mischievous to himself. There is so much of reason and truth in either reading, that 'tis hard to tell which is to be preferr'd, and therefore I shall briefly speak to both.



1. The curse causeless shall not come upon the persons, at whom it is levell'd. And if this be true, and we are sure we are innocent, we need not much distress our selves, whatever the treatment is we meet with at the hands of our enemies. They may revile and abuse us, and say all manner of evil falsely against us; but this shall not really turn to our prejudice. And to evidence this, consider,

(1.) That God has not left it in the power of such persons to execute their sentences, they are pleased to pass upon others; or, the designs and purposes they have laid against them. They are often ready to flatter themselves into an opinion of their own power, and to be confident of the success of their own projects; that they shall be able to wreck their malice upon their enemies, and to make them as miserable, as they would wish them to be. But, as they are not blessed, whom they bless; so, neither are they cursed, whom they curse. There is a supreme Lord over them, and all their designs, who will not suffer them to proceed according to their hearts lust, but directs all with a different view. He makes *the wrath of man to praise him*, and whatever is over and above that, *he restrains*. He disappoints such, when they seem to think themselves nearest to the execution of their purposes, and when they are most confident of crushing the objects of their hatred and spite. Thus it has been seen of old, and thus have we seen in the city of our God. Let it be recorded for the generations to come, that they may remember, and praise, and trust in the Lord.

(2.) As they have it not in their power to make whom they please cursed; so neither does a holy

Sermon holy and righteous God regard their curse, to  
 III. execute it. God is indeed a God of recompen-  
 ces ; but where the curse is causeless and unde-  
 served, his justice no way obliges him to fulfil it.  
 If the curse causeless takes effect, it must be  
 thro' the power of those from whom it proceeds,  
 which we see it cannot ; or else thro' the ven-  
 geance of God, in answer to their desires. But  
 there can be no reason to be afraid upon any  
 such account. God hears not sinners ; and he,  
 who has made love, charity, and forgiveness so  
 essential to true religion, cannot be thought to  
 be pleased with the wrath, malice, and cruelty  
 of angry men, or to delight to execute all their  
 rash and hasty judgments. We need not there-  
 fore distress our selves, when we know that pro-  
 fane men curse us, or wish our confusion in their  
 cups ; no, nor when 'tis done with more gra-  
 vity and solemnity ; and religion it self is pro-  
 stituted, to set off envy and malice to the  
 greater advantage. God is too much displeased  
 with a censorious, damning humour, ever to do  
 any thing to gratify it.

(3.) 'Tis a sure evidence that the curse cause-  
 less shall not come, since a good God has, by  
 his promise, secur'd us a blessing instead of it.  
 God is the patron of the innocent and oppressed ;  
 and the more any are abus'd and run down  
 wrongfully, the greater is his compassion and  
 favour toward them. God will not have fellow-  
 ship with the workers of iniquity, nor take part  
 with them in their spite : So far is he from this,  
 that he has made this very treatment an argu-  
 ment of their blessedness. *Blessed are ye, says*  
*Christ, when men shall revile you, and persecute*  
*you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely*  
*for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for*  
*great*



great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted Sermon  
 they the prophets which were before you. The best III.  
 of men, who have gone before us, have met   
 with the like usage. Nay, which is much greater,  
 the Son of God himself was thus treated. He,  
 as well as his followers, was traduced as a sedi-  
 tious person, and used with the utmost spite and  
 malignity. But those who were cursed of men,  
 were reckon'd by God to be blessed, and actu-  
 ally were blessed in his favour. And God's  
 favour and love is a security of blessedness to his  
 people, in spite of all the ill-will and malevolent  
 designs of their enemies. Observe how God  
 speaks concerning the enemies of his people :  
*They hired Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of* Dent.  
*Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the Lord* xxiii. 4, 5.  
*thy God would not hearken unto Balaam ; but the*  
*Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing, because*  
*the Lord thy God loved thee.* God made the  
 wretch that intended a curse, to pronounce a  
 blessing ; and the more forward men were to  
 curse them, the more inclined God was to bless  
 them : And the very curse of the wicked is  
 sometimes a blessing and an advantage. For  
 when their wickedness is brought to light, and  
 has render'd them odious and abominable, 'tis  
 natural for men to apprehend there must be a  
 more than ordinary goodness in those who are  
 the objects of such mens greatest hatred. And  
 the most angry of our adversaries, I hope, will  
 not be displeas'd with us, if we observe and ad-  
 mire the steps of divine providence, in this re-  
 spect toward our selves.

2. The curse causeless, according to the other  
 reading, shall come upon him ; that is, shall  
 recoil upon the author. The greatest mischief  
 it does, is to him out of whose mouth it proceeds.

Sermon

III.

Prov. viii.  
36.

And this cannot be thought strange, since the curse causeless is a palpable wickedness. And who is most hurt by any wickedness, but the person who commits it? *He that sins against God wrongs his own soul.* By this, as well as all other wickedness, men provoke the anger of the almighty; and that is, of all others, the most dreadful curse. And I may further add, that this is a very aggravated wickedness, and therefore may the rather be supposed likely to fall heavy upon them who are guilty of it.

Matthew  
vii. 1, 2.

The thing is not only contrary to a gospel temper, and a true christian spirit; but is likewise a most daring invasion of the prerogative of the heavenly king, which must be most notorious in those, who pretend, above all men, to be tender of, and zealous for the prerogative of earthly kings. Rash and censorious judging, is a bold aspiring to his prerogative of searching the hearts of men; and Christ has warn'd men what to expect in this case. *Judge not, that ye be not judged: For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* So that our Saviour himself has determin'd the case, that the curse causeless, the harsh and cruel sentences men pass upon their neighbours, shall be executed upon themselves.

Heb. x. 30.

And this is further an invading God's prerogative, in as much as 'tis a taking vengeance out of God's hand into mens own. *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will recompence.* But when men become thus daring, God may convince them of their error, and satisfy them, to whom vengeance belongs, to their cost. And all the world must own, there is a righteousness in the procedure, when men are dealt with according



## The CURSE *causeless.*

109

According to the verdict they pass upon their neighbours. What more just than that he should have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy? And that such a sentence should take place: *As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him: As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment; so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.* And very applicable here are the words of the apostle: *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? God is known,* says the Psalmist, *by the judgment which he executeth: The wicked is snared by the work of his own hands.*

Sermon

III.

Jam. ii.

13.

Psal. cix.

17, 18.

Rom. ii. 3.

Pf. ix. 16.

And certainly the conduct of divine providence has been very admirable in our time; we have seen the men, who were so zealous in asserting the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, and in damning such as oppos'd them; we have lived, I say, to see them forc'd to renounce both the principle and practice, and take up arms in defence of their liberties, when they were themselves attack'd. And for their acting thus at the revolution, if the thing be consider'd abstractly from their before avow'd principles, I am far from blaming them. But if there was any edge in the severe sentences they us'd to pass, 'tis evident from that time it became turn'd against themselves. We have seen the men who doom'd us as rebels to destruction in this world, and the pit of hell in the world to come; them, I say, even them, have we seen left by a just and righteous God, to act the rebels in the open field, against a government which

Sermon which had never given them the least cause of complaint; and which they themselves, in the solemnest manner, had testify'd to be rightful and just.

Psal. vii.  
14. &c.

And now, what shall we say, but that the curse causeless is come upon the curser? *Behold he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceiv'd mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.*

I have but a few things to add briefly concerning our duty on this occasion.

I. When we observe this conduct of providence, it should excite our praise and thanksgiving. So the *Psalmist*, upon his having mention'd the wicked falling into the mischief they intended for others, in the *psalm* just now refer'd to, immediately adds: *I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness*, (there is a righteousness in the procedure, that well deserves to be the subject of our praise) *and will sing praise unto the name of the Lord most high.* When the enemy *said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them; but God blew upon them with his wind, and confounded them; then Moses and the children of Israel celebrated it with a song; then they extoll'd him as beyond compare: who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods! who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!* There is a charming beauty in the course of providence, that calls often for our admiration and praise. God often displays his righteousness,



ousness, in over-ruling the sins of men to the Sermon  
accomplishment of his own purposes ; and his III.  
justice is display'd in his letting wicked instru-  
ments, by wicked methods, bring about a terri-  
ble vengeance. And these works of the Lord are *Psal. cxi.*  
great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. <sup>2, 3, 4</sup>  
His work is honourable and glorious ; and his righte-  
ousness indureth for ever. He hath made his won-  
derful works to be remembred. And therefore well  
may I say with the *Psalmist*, in the first verse of  
that *psalm*, *Praise ye the Lord, I will praise the*  
*Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the*  
*upright, and in the congregation.*

2. We may from hence satisfy our selves of the  
reasonableness of our bearing such treatment  
with patience. Our enemies are not able to take  
the least step without the divine permission.  
They are limited in every thing they attempt,  
and would set about. However they may curse  
us causelessly, yet they cannot inflict their own  
curse ; and since the curse causeless does not  
take effect upon those, against whom 'tis de-  
sign'd, there can be little reason for our  
being very much disturb'd and disquieted by it.  
'Tis indeed provoking to a person to be so treat-  
ed, when he has given no occasion for it, and  
it may be some trouble ; but this trouble is  
more easy to be born than many others. And  
'tis a sign we are little acquainted with the great  
duty of self-denial, and the bearing the cross, if  
we cannot take patiently such reproachful lan-  
guage. If we cannot bear hard words, how shall  
we resist unto blood ? Besides, as they are not  
able at their own pleasure to inflict their cause-  
less curse, so neither can they so much as curse  
without a divine permission. And if we consi-  
der

Sermon der the trouble, as under God's ordering, there  
 III. is the more reason to bear it patiently ; as  
 ~~~~~ David did when cursed by Shimei: *Let him curse,*  
 2 Sam. *because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David.*
 xvi. 10. *Who then shall say, wherefore hast thou done so?*
 And the rather may we bear it patiently, since
 such treatment has been the lot of good men in
 all ages. *David* I mention'd; and *Jeremiah* com-
 plains, that though he had given them no cause,
 Jer. xv. *yet every one of the people did curse him.* And the
 10. thing is most notorious in the apostles, and espe-
 cially in our Lord himself.

3. We may hence be directed in our conduct
 toward them. We have more reason to pity
 them, than to be inrag'd by them. Poor souls!
 little do they think what they are doing, when
 they are causelessly cursing their neighbours.
 They will not be able to do us a thousandth part
 of the hurt, which without fail they do them-
 selves. We have no need to return them their
 own usage: They will have enough of their
 own cursing, and need no addition of ours. Let
 us then follow the direction of our Lord: *But*
 Matth. v. *I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that*
 44. *curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray*
for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.
 Our business is to pity and pray for them, that
 the curse they imprecate upon others, may, by
 their timely repentance, be prevented from ever
 falling upon themselves.

4. Let us hence learn our duty, to trust in
 God, and be the more careful to perform it.
 We ought to trust in him, to keep us from the
 mischief our enemies would be glad to see fall
 upon us. Thus *David* encourag'd himself in the
 Lord his God, when *Shimei* curs'd him: *It may*
 2 Sam. *befall me, but will not fall upon me.*
 xvii. 12.

The CURSE causeless.

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be the Lord will look upon my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. Sermon III.

Let their malice drive us to our refuge, and make us the more confident in our prayers to God for his blessing. The more sincerely and heartily we trust in him, the more easy we may well be : for this is a certain method of turning their curse to an advantage. And therefore let us say with *David* : *Let them curse, but bless* Psal: cix. 28.

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The

The Evil and Cure of Divisions.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

E X O N,

At the Opening of a

New MEETING-HOUSE,
March 15, 17¹⁸/₁₉.

Being the First LORD'S-DAY after the
Ejection of the MINISTERS.

The PREFACE.

THE reader will not wonder at my choosing
a subject of this nature, upon such an
unhappy and sad occasion, which is too
well known to need to be set out in this
preface, and has been already in part related, and
will be more fully when I shall have time for it, if
it shall be found necessary to publish it to the world.

An

The PREFACE.

115

An apology may well be expected for my printing a sermon drawn up in so much distraction and hurry, as will be suppos'd to attend my present circumstances. That which I offer, if the reader will accept it, is, that the mis-representations made of us and our design, call'd for the immediate publication of some thing of this nature; and the hurry would not have been the less, if I had laid aside the sermon, and written a treatise instead of it. Besides, I was persuaded a sermon of this nature might at this time be very seasonable for other places as well as this; for the utmost confusion must be unavoidable, if a check be not given to an intemperate zeal, and the dissenters themselves abandon their plea for liberty, and against impositions, and attempt to set up an INQUISITION. For my own part, I shall take this opportunity to declare, that however earnestly I may desire the continuance of my ministry, if it may be of service; yet I never design to purchase it at the expence of my christian liberty.

I 2

I COR.

I COR. I. 13.

Is CHRIST divided?—

Sermon
IV.

HAD it been the good-will and pleasure of God, I should rather have chosen to have been in the obscurest corner of the whole land, where I might have reap'd the blessed fruits of peace and concord, than to have my lot, as I have this day, in a famous city, which is become the scene of so much strife and contention. This is the more grievous to me, because it threatens visibly that it will not rest here, but will spread to the widest distance.

Divisions I have always lamented and dreaded. And had it been in my power to have hinder'd it, I can truly say, there should not have been this day any sad occasion for the melancholy subject I have chosen. But nothing comes to pass without the providence of God; and therefore we are to submit to what we should not have chosen. He knows what he designs, and how to bring about his designs in the best manner; and therefore when we can't help blaming the occasion, we should yet, in the way of our duty, trust him with the issue, and say in the mean while, good is the will of the Lord.

Division is the thing we now unhappily lament; and division is the subject of the text, wherein St. Paul exposes it by this moving question, *Is Christ divided?*

If

The Evil and Cure of Divisions.

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If you look back to the 10th verse of the Sermon chapter, you will find, that with great earnestness he there beseeches them to avoid divisions. **IV.**

Now I beseech you, brethren, says he, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly join'd together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. He styles them brethren, and in the next verse he thus bespeaks them all, *my brethren*, esteeming them on all sides as his brethren, while they could not easily esteem one another as such: And by this he puts them in mind of that love, concord, and unity there ought to be among them, who stood in such a relation to one another. He beseeches them *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, whose disciples they were, and into whose name they were baptiz'd; designing to divert them from glorying, as they did, in the names of men, and to fix their regard to that worthy name by which they were called. The same thing there mention'd can only signify the doctrine which he had himself receiv'd of the Lord, and taught them; for he did not expect they should make any thing else the measure of their agreement in their speech, their mind, or judgment.

In the next verse he acquaints them with the reason of his so particularly urging this upon them, viz. the account he had received of the strife that was risen among them. *For, says he, it hath been declared unto me, my brethren, by them that are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.* He then declares the nature of those contentions which were among them, ver. 12. *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ, &c.* I can hardly think he means, that the

Sermon *Corinthians* were really divided about himself,

IV.

Apollos, and *Cephas*, and that they set them up as the heads of the several parties among them, He seems rather studiously to avoid naming the particular teachers of the church of *Corinth*, about whom they were divided ; and to put these names in the stead of them, that he might give as little offence as possible. He seems thus to explain his account of their divisions, chap. iv. ver. 6. *And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to my self and Apollos, for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to think of men, above that which is written of them, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another, q. d.* “ Your behaviour would be unreasonable, if “ you were really divided about us ; and you “ may easily perceive it is so in the present case. “ Let your particular teachers, whom you set “ up as heads of your several parties, be what “ they will ; yet they are but *men*, and you are “ not to magnify them as though they were “ more, or to glory in one to the depreciating “ of others.

St. *Paul* having specified the nature and kind of their *divisions*, ver. 12. he proceeds in the text to exhort with them, *Is Christ divided?* Where you see he would convince them of the evil of their divisions, by the interpretation which it was natural for men to make of them. 'Tis the ready way to shame men out of any thing, when you can make them see that it must carry an air of absurdity along with it ; for men don't use to be fond of that which they see will necessarily expose them by its absurd consequences. I shall suit my discourse upon the words to the present occasion, and therefore,

The Evil and Cure of Divisions.

119

Sermon

IV.

I. Shall endeavour to shew you the *evil* of *divisions* among Christians, by representing to you what they seem plainly to imply, according to the text, *viz.* that *Christ is divided*.

II. I will attempt to set before you the *duty* of christians with respect to *divisions*, when they at any time happen to arise in the church.

I. I will endeavour to shew you the *evil* of *divisions* among christians, by representing to you what they seem to imply, according to the text, *viz.* that *Christ is divided*.

There is one thing I would here premise, that we may carry it along with us thro' the whole discourse; and that is, that as St. Paul charges this consequence upon the divisions which were among the *Corinthians*, so the same consequence must with a clearer evidence be chargeable upon such divisions as rise much higher than theirs did, and are certainly in their own nature much worse. You will perceive the reasonableness of my assertion, when I shall have set before you the case of the *Corinthians*, and that which I would compare with it. The *divisions* among the *Corinthians* lay only in their animosities one against another, without breaking the communion of the church. They had not proceeded so far as a separation from one another in the worship of God. However they were *puffed up* for one teacher against another; and there were among them then, as well as afterwards, when the second epistle was written to them, *debates*, *envyings*, *wraths*, *strifes*, *backbitings*, *whisperings*, *swellings* and *tumults*, 2 Cor. xii. 20. They yet

Sermon join'd together in worshipping God in the same
 IV. place. This appears by what St. Paul says of
 them, 1 Cor. xi. 20. *When ye come together there-
 fore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's
 supper.* But when the animosities rise higher,
 and the divisions proceed much farther, and
 christians cannot bear with one another in the
 worship of God; when upon their differing sen-
 timents they come to be form'd into separate
 bodies and societies; this must be chargeable
 with all the same consequences that the other is.
 Nay, as the passions of men in this case must be
 more violent and extravagant, on one side, at
 least, if not on both; this must be chargeable
 with all these consequences with a considerable
 aggravation. These divisions are much worse
 than the other; and therefore the stronger and
 more convincing is the evidence christians may
 be expostulated with; *Is Christ divided?*

The words are read by some without an inter-
 rogation; *Christ is divided.* Should we take them
 so, there would be no great difference as to the
 sense; for then the apostle must be understood
 to urge them with the invidious consequence of
 their divisions; and the same must be his design
 if the words are read as an expostulatory inter-
 rogation. I shall take them as they lie in our
 own translation; and the rather because the rest
 of the verse being continued in the same form,
 makes this account of the words appear to be the
 most natural and easy. *Is Christ divided? Was
 Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the
 name of Paul?*

I shall take notice of various things, to which
 this question may be understood to refer. Whe-
 ther the apostle had only one, or all of them, in
 his thoughts, 'tis manifest that the doing any
 thing

thing which may be fairly interpreted to imply *Sermon*
that *Christ was divided*, must be a very great *IV.*
evil.

1. This question may be understood to relate to the *religion* which Christ has instituted and appointed. 'Tis no harsh *metonymy*, to interpret *Christ* sometimes to signify that *religion* of which he is the author. I shall mention one place which seems to be very pertinent, 2 *Cor.* i. 18, 19. Where the apostle's design is to shew that the religion of the blessed Jesus which he taught, was not an uncertain and variable thing; and thus he expresses himself: *As God is true, our word* (i. e. the doctrine we preached) *toward you, was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.* Where the Son of God, *Jesus Christ*, is said to be what the doctrine concerning him was. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, and his doctrine is invariably the same; whence the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, chap. xiii. 8, 9. urges them by that consideration, not to be *carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*

Christ taught the most exact and perfect institution; and he taught but one. This he fully settled; and in this all his disciples and followers are to agree. This religion is only to be learnt from his word; nor can we with assurance and safety depend upon any thing else in our search after it. But when those who call themselves his disciples and followers, fiercely contend and quarrel, divide and separate upon a religious account, this looks in the eye of the world, as tho' he had not appointed one religion in common for all; but there was one institution.

Sermon tion for one party, and another for another.

IV.  Alas! how commonly is this so taken among our selves? how common is it for men to reckon those who differ from them in modes and forms, and little punctilio's, as men of a different religion? And must not that conduct of christians be manifestly injurious to their blessed Lord, which gives great occasion to the world to make such reflections? Must it not be injurious to his wisdom? What must the world think, but that either he did not know what he design'd to appoint, or how to express it? Why else should his followers seem to be of different religions, when he profess'd his design of appointing only one?

2. This question may be understood to refer to the different and *opposite interests*, which they might seem to pursue. When men quarrel and oppose one another, they must be thought to have opposite interests in view, and to be driving on different designs; or else to be very weak, in not discerning the unreasonableness of their being displeased with one another, when they have all one and the same design at heart. And when christians quarrel and divide, does not their behaviour seem plainly to imply the same thing? And since they all profess to act under the direction of Christ, and to be pursuing the interest he has recommended to them, does not this look as though *Christ were divided*, and that he had as many distinct interests to be pursued, as there were parties among christians? But how unaccountable must it be for men who profess the same religion, (as all do that profess themselves of the christian religion, which is but one) and who profess to walk by the same rule; how unaccountable, I say, must it be for them,

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to be pursuing any opposite interests and designs? **Sermon**
The grand design in which all good christians **IV.**
certainly are agreed, should, one would think, 
so far influence them at least, as to make them
bear with one another's differing sentiments con-
cerning inferior matters. And it looks too much
as tho' they were not agreed in their grand
design, when they treat one another with out-
ragious hatred and fury.

Consider the church of Christ as his kingdom ;
what a sad and melancholy reflection upon it
do these divisions carry in them, as though it
were not well order'd ? Our Saviour has told us,
that *every kingdom divided against it self, is brought
to desolation : And every city or house divided against
it self shall not stand*, Matth. xii. 25. And is this
both dishonourable and pernicious to any king-
dom ; and must it not be so to the church of
Christ ? Nay, and will it not be too natural and
easy for men to carry their reflections farther,
making them fall upon Christ, the founder of
this kingdom ? If we are his subjects, and a no-
tion is to be form'd of his kingdom from us ;
how disagreeable an one must men entertain of
him ? For what must they think of him, if
they imagine it to have been his design to set
up such a kingdom, wherein his subjects should
pursue opposite interests, hate, and persecute,
and devour one another ?

3. This question may be understood to relate
to the *church* of Christ consider'd as his *body* ;
and so when the apostle asks, *Is Christ divided ?*
it will be as tho' he had said, has Christ then
more bodies than one ? Has he chang'd his first
resolution of having only one body ? The name
Christ is sometimes put to signify Christ and his
church together, as making one body. Thus,
1 Cor.

Sermon I Cor. xii. 12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. Gal. iii. 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.*

'Tis evident our Saviour earnestly desir'd and recommended the closest union among his disciples. This we may learn from many of his discourses, and from his prayer before he left the world, *John xvii.* 'Twas his will that his body should be one, even as he intended that one spirit should animate all the members of it. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, Eph. iv. 4.* Now when christians are divided, and especially when they separate from one another, and disclaim each other's communion; how does this look as tho' they were not one body? 'Tis true, this is not really the case; christians, while they disagree and separate, may yet all belong to the one body of Christ; but still this is what such divisions seem to declare. And should it not be very disagreeable to them, to do any thing that may bring such a reproach upon the church of Christ?

Love is one chief band whereby the body of Christ should be closely united and join'd together; but when this is dissolv'd, and instead of love there is variance and hatred, strife and contention, and even a shunning one another; how unlike do we appear to the character we should bear as christians? And how little do we resemble the disciples of Christ, whom he would have all men know by their having *love one to another?* *John xiii. 35.* Certainly there must somewhere be a very great fault, when christians do

so much as seem to be form'd into opposite bodies; since Christ intended that all his followers should be so strictly and closely united into one body. Sermon IV.

4. We may suppose this question to relate to Christ as the *head* of the church; and so divisions carry in them a reflection, as though Christ were divided; as though there were more Christs; that is, more heads of the Church than one. This, perhaps, may, with as much reason as any thing I have mentioned, be supposed to have been chiefly aim'd at by St. *Paul* in these words: Christ is the only saviour and head of the church. He has in *all things the prebeminence*, as it has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, Col. i. 18, 19. *One is our master, even Christ*, Mat. xxiii. 10. To him, and to him only are we bound to adhere. But for men to divide from those who are the disciples of this our common Lord, to set up others as the heads of their several parties, to profess a strict adherence to them, to take up with their dictates, rules, and directions, without examining whether there is good evidence of their being agreeable to the mind of Christ, is really no better than the making so many Christs of them. For he that pays that regard to any man, or body of men, which is due to Christ only, in effect makes a Christ of that man, or body of men. And if you do but allow men to be the authoritative interpreters of that declaration which Christ has left us of his will, so as that their decisions and determinations shall bind your consciences, and you shall be obliged to subscribe or agree with them, this is still the same thing; for 'tis very easy for an authoritative interpreter to confound and make what he will of the text; as we see the papists

Sermon papists do at this day, who are the only men that
 IV. openly avow the claim, and are consistent with
 themselves in it, as they pretend to an infallibi-
 lity, without which an authoritative interpreter
 is a great absurdity.

Now as christians are subject to Christ as their
 only master, teacher and lord, how contrary
 must they act to their obligations to him, when
 they set up others in his stead, and transform
 to themselves his ministers and servants into
 so many infallible teachers and lords of their
 faith, that is, into so many Christs?

That 'tis not unreasonable to understand the
 apostle in this sense, may appear by what follows
 immediately in this verse: *Is Christ divided?*
Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized
in the name of Paul? q. d. "How absurd would
 " it be for you to set me up as the head of a
 " party among you? Am I become your savi-
 " our, or your master? What have I done, that
 " ever my *name* should be thought worthy to
 " be mentioned in such a way? Was I ever
 " crucified for you as Christ was? Were you
 " not baptiz'd into the *name* of Christ, and so
 " made the *disciples* of Christ, the great infalli-
 " ble teacher of his church? What reason can
 " there be why you should denominate your
 " selves from me? Were you ever baptiz'd into
 " my name, as tho' you were my disciples,
 " bound to receive any thing merely as deliver'd
 " by me, without some evidence of my having
 " receiv'd it first of the Lord? Can you ima-
 " gine that I will bear to stand in competition
 " with him, as I must, if I would set up an autho-
 " rity of my own, and become the head of a
 " faction among you?

'Tis derogatory, my brethren, to the honour of our great Lord, for you to make any men upon earth the lords of your faith, or the rule of your obedience. Christ alone are you to hear, and his voice only are you to obey : But if you have an implicit faith in any man, or pay a blind obedience to him, glorying in your being his followers, without using your own understandings in searching after his will, you do in effect set up another Christ, and declare that Christ is divided. Sermon IV.

I have now done with the first general head of my discourse, and shall proceed,

II. To set before you the *duty* of christians with respect to divisions, when they at any time unhappily arise in the church. And the advice I shall offer you in this case, is what I can with pleasure recommend ; for I know a very great satisfaction must attend the following it.

I. Beware of placing religion where Christ himself has not placed any. There is nothing more destructive of the peace of the church than the neglecting this. When, without clear evidence from the holy scriptures, men will suppose a thing to be absolutely necessary ; they will be very apt to think, and speak hardly of those who will not, as slightly and carelessly as themselves, take matters upon trust, but insist upon clear proof. And if mens zeal is once kindled, the weakness and defectiveness of their evidence will serve many times only to enrage and inflame them. We ought always to read the scriptures with an unbiassed mind, with a design of being instructed and taught by them ; and with a resolution never to lay any greater stress upon matters than we find they plainly do. And what peace and quiet might the

Sermon church of God injoy, did such a disposition
 IV. prevail!

2. In difficult and contested points, be not too eager to impose and obtrude upon others your own persuasion; but be as ready to bear with others in their differing from you, as you would have them to be to bear with you in your differing from them. There are some things which are in themselves abstruse and difficult; and there are others which, tho' they are not so in themselves, have been made so by the subtilty of artful men; and 'tis hardly to be expected, that christians should be perfectly agreed about either of these. We find there was not a perfect agreement in the sentiments of christians, in the days of the apostles. There were some then who would of their own heads devise *fundamentals*. *Except ye be circumcis'd, said they, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,* Acts xv. 1. Nor can it be any just matter of wonder, if there be a diversity of sentiments, now the infallible inspiration of the spirit is ceased. Certainly the advice which the apostles gave then, cannot be unsuitable for christians now. Why should it not be now as proper as then, for them *with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering to forbear one another in love*; and so to *indeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?* Eph. iv. 2, 3. Why is not that rule good now, *hast thou faith? Have it to thy self before God,* Rom. xiv. 21. Why may not every man, in disputable matters, be suffered to injoy his own persuasion, without molestation and disturbance? Thou art persuaded the truth lies on one side; and thy persuasion follows upon the best use thou art able to make of thy understanding: Rest then contented, and be not grieved at thy fellow christians;

christian, who tho' he has taken the same course, happens to be of a contrary persuasion, and verily thinks the truth lies on the other side. Where Christ has laid a stress, we may safely too ; nor need we scruple earnestly to insist upon the belief of any doctrine, or the performance of any duty, which the scripture has made necessary. But in other things, and especially those we want clear conceptions of our selves, modesty and caution will best become us. We are men, and therefore liable to mistake as well as others : Our confidence of our being able to answer all the objections that can be urged against our opinion, may be really owing to our own ignorance, and our being unacquainted with the one half of them.

Nothing is more offensive and contrary to the rules of conversation, than for persons to force others to hear such discourse as is distastful and disagreeable. Nor is the doing so likely to answer a good end ; for men are much mistaken, if they imagine that is not a more likely way to beget and strengthen prejudices against them, than to procure regard, or work a conviction.

There are two things which I think christians of all parties cannot be too much caution'd against ; the one is, the contenting themselves with the bare outward form of religion, without the life and power of it ; and the other is, what I have been speaking of, an imposing persecuting spirit. The former of these will not be more destructive of a man's own soul, than the latter will be of the peace of the church, and the quiet of the world. And this we have reason to guard against, because there is in men generally, at least, if not universally, a strong inclination to it. I have

Sermon thought and spoke very hardly of mens tyranni-

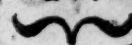
IV. cally invading the just rights and liberties of
 ~~~~~ their neighbours ; and I am still of the same  
 mind as to the thing it self, that nothing de-  
 serves a severer censure. But yet I must say,  
 that I see human nature works so strongly this  
 way, and I perceive so much of the same spirit  
 in those whom I cannot but respect and value  
 as very excellent and good men ; that tho' I alter  
 not my notion of the thing it self, I shall al-  
 ways be milder in my censures of the men whom  
 I can't but charge with it : And the observation  
 I have made how natural it is to men to abuse  
 power, fixes me in this judgment ; that 'tis the  
 wisdom, and for the happiness, of any govern-  
 ment, never to give any one set of men a power  
 to tyrannize over another ; for I verily believe  
 we can't answer for any men, that when they  
 have such a power, they will not use it.

3. That you may be clear of promoting di-  
 visions, give no incouragement to evil reports.  
*Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out ; so where  
 there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. But the  
 words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go  
 down to the innermost parts of the belly, Prov. xxvi.*  
 20, 22. There is nothing more destructive to  
 peace than such kind of men ; and if we will  
 indulge our selves in their practice, we must  
 certainly be chargeable in some measure with  
 the divisions that are the consequences. Com-  
 mon fame is a very uncertain foundation for men  
 to rest on, in spreading reports to their neigh-  
 bours disadvantage : But let the reports be ever  
 so true, the spreading of them many times only  
 tends to exasperate and stir up strife, whereas  
 the avoiding the practice our selves, and the  
 discouraging it in others, is the way to promote  
 peace.



peace. Had we been so happy as to have more generally taken this course, our present divisions could never have risen to that height they have.

Sermon  
IV.



4. Be sure to love all good men, let them differ ever so much from you. This is the ready way to preserve our innocence; for men will be very backward to quarrel with, or divide from those whom they sincerely love and honour. And doubtless we are obliged to love all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and evidence it by their walking according to the rule of the gospel. Whatever mens sentiments may be concerning some speculative and controverted points, or concerning modes of worship; yet true piety and goodness are always to be prized and valued. A good man under any denomination should be cordially loved; for as he that *fears God, and works righteousness in every nation, and every party, is accepted of God*; so there can be no just reason why he should not be approved of men.

5. Bewail the divisions which 'tis not in your power to prevent. This I hope we all unfeignedly do. I am sure nothing is more grievous to me, than to see what I do this day; which should never have been, could I have hinder'd it. But we can be answerable only for our selves; and if others will *separate us from their company*, if our brethren will cast us off, as that is the case, we must submit; but our submission ought to be attended with great grief and trouble. Divisions are so dishonourable and fatal to religion, that no christian should ever behold them, and much less should be a party, tho' an innocent one in them, without a wounded spirit and an aking heart.

Sermon 6. When divisions unhappily arise, do all that  
 IV. is consistent with truth and your allegiance to  
 ~~~~~ Christ, in order to heal them. As they are so  
 evil in themselves, and the sight of them ought
 to be most afflictive, so nothing should be more
 pleasing to us, than to have a hand in making
 them up. *Blessed are the peace makers*, Matt. v. 9.
 Happy is the man who can be a means of com-
 posing differences among neighbours, and in pri-
 vate families ; but much more happy is he who
 contributes to the repairing the breaches made in
 the church. We must never sacrifice truth, nor
 acknowledge any beside our Saviour to have an
 authority over our consciences in matters of re-
 ligion. Whenever men will break in upon ei-
 ther of these, or set up any other standard in
 religion, than the revelation our great master
 has left us, we must be true to him, let who will
 be offended ; and they must answer for all the
 bad consequences of the difference, who will not
 agree with us upon such terms. And I will here,
 upon this occasion, most solemnly profess this to
 be my resolution, that by God's help no resent-
 ment of any indignity I have met with, nor a
 concern for any worldly interest, shall keep me
 from harkening to counsels of peace, or from
 embracing any, I will not say reasonable, but
 even tolerable offers. There is no breach in
 the church of God, which I would not gladly
 make up, by parting with any thing but a good
 conscience.

7. By the exemplariness of your conversation,
 convince those who have cast you off, that
 they have been mistaken concerning you. I do
 not speak now of the body of the people ; for
 this is, I thank God, the act of a very few, and
 many have been silent and passive in it : But I
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The Evil and Cure of Divisions.

133

Speak with relation to those few, whom, though we can commend neither the justice nor the righteousness of their proceedings, we have reason to esteem as good men and fellow-christians. You are zealous to assert and maintain your liberty; you do well, 'tis too valuable a thing to be easily and tamely abandon'd; but abuse not liberty it self. *Let your light therefore shine brightly before men*; for unless you are circumspect and cautious in your whole conversation, you will strengthen the prejudices of such as are displeased with you, and give a great deal of credit to their hard speeches concerning you.

8. Speak as softly and tenderly of those who have made this sad breach, as your own necessary vindication will allow; and by a mild, meek, and gentle carriage, labour to overcome and soften such as are angry with you. What a noble example has our Saviour set us of such a carriage? And since we profess our selves his disciples, let us labour to follow it. 'Tis, indeed, very just and reasonable, that such as are injur'd and reproach'd, should have the liberty of asserting their innocence, and shewing where the fault truly lies. But notwithstanding this, our religion should teach us not to give way to passionate resentments against them whom we ought still to own as our brethren; however, in this matter, they have carried it like adversaries. By meekness and patience you may work upon them, which you are never like to do by the contrary course. You know you are requir'd to love your enemies, and much more ought you to love your friends; and such, after all, you must take them to be, believing they are not really enemies to you; but only to somewhat they fancy to be amiss in you. We have a noble rule,

K 3

my

Sermon my brethren, let us then endeavour to live up
 IV. to it: Let us *not render evil for evil*; let us not
 be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;
 let us behave our selves, as we have now especially great reason, with the utmost moderation, that we may be as able to account for our conduct in the apostle's words, as I am sure we are for our present circumstances: *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat*, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. Nor can the word *defamed* be counted too harsh for our case, who are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. Whether such a moderate and peaceable behaviour shall have the desired effect, to restore peace among us, God only knows: but this I am very sure of, that 'twill keep the heart in the best temper for the worship of God, yield the greatest ease and satisfaction to the mind, and be most acceptable in the sight of God.

9. Let no divisions incline you to be unconcern'd for the main interest, in which all christians must necessarily be agreed; but keep that still at heart. Whatever course men take, yet so far as we see them make it their endeavour to preach Christ's gospel, and propagate his religion in the world; let us shew our selves pleas'd, and heartily wish them success; and make it our fervent prayer that God would turn even this to the furtherance of the gospel. God over-ruled St. Paul's troubles, and made them serve such an end, as he tells us in his epistle to the *Philippians*; where he speaks also of somewhat so very like to our present case, and has set us such a noble example of the disposition I am now recommending, that I cannot but desire you to take special notice of it. Phil. i. 12. *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the*
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things which happen'd unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in the palace, and in all other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good-will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preach'd; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. And therefore,

10. When you have a good conscience in having done your duty, and endeavour'd to prevent divisions, be not discouraged, if they prove unavoidable. If men reject and forsake you, yet you are not alone, if the Father is with you. Nor are you singular in the treatment you meet with. In like manner were the prophets and apostles used before you. Never were men more studious of peace than the apostles, who yet were not able to live peaceably with all; they were not only persecuted by the Gentiles, but by the Jews, to whom they paid a particular respect, and with whom they endeavour'd to maintain a communion in their worship. There is nothing therefore now befalls us but what has been common to christians, in the best times of the church. Nay, we are expressly warn'd by Christ to expect such usage; and he has provided comfort for his people under it. Luke vi. 22. *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy:*

Sermon *for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in*
 IV, *like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. La-*
 bour to give no occasion; but if occasion be
 taken where 'tis not given, and ye are reproach'd
 for the name of Christ (because you stand up for
 his kingly power and authority) count your selves
 happy; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon
 you. And if any man suffer as a christian, let him
 not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this be-
 half, 1 Pet. iv. 13, 15. Let me add one text
 more as well suited to your present circum-
 stances, Isa. lxvi. 5. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye*
that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated
you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said,
let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your
joy,

Let not the unsuccessfulness of your indea-
 vours discourage you from studying the things
 that make for peace; and if you cannot have
 peace with others, take care to preserve it among
 your selves. Take heed of any thing that has
 the least tendency to beget jealousies and ani-
 mosities; for *behold* (and indeed you have seen it)
how great a matter a little fire kindleth, Jam. iii. 5.

I can't but mention, for your encouragement,
 one advantage which I am apt to expect from
 our present case; and that is, that the spirit of
 imposition and persecution will hereby be ren-
 der'd more odious. 'Tis much easier to perceive
 the evil of such a spirit in others, than in our
 selves. We have seen and condemn'd it in others,
 who we hope will take this opportunity to ob-
 serve what it is in those who differ from them.
 And if our patient suffering shall help forward
 such a conviction, the satisfaction we shall have
 in being so serviceable to mankind, will be an
 abundant recompence to us even in this world.

I must add something here, with reference to Sermon IV. the reproaches which with great zeal and liberality are cast upon us. You see how industrious some men are to fix a name upon us, because 'tis counted *odious*. *Arians* it seems we must be, for this reason, because they will have it so: And yet, if I may use St. Paul's reasoning, I believe there's not one soul among us, that ever imagin'd *Arius* was crucified for us. We know not why they should question our veracity, when we assure them, we were no more baptiz'd into the name of *Arius*, than they were into that of *Sabellius*, *Paulus Samosatenus*, or *Hobbes*. I mention not this with the least design, or desire, to have any odious name fix'd upon them. No, I like much better that they, and we also, if we may have their sufferance and permission, may have no other name fix'd upon us, than that which is our common glory. Would to God that one name which was first given to the disciples at *Antioch*, might alone be heard among us, and make all the *odious* names of distinction to be quite lost and forgotten. I know not what satisfaction they have at present in their usage of us; but I can't think they will find much cause to applaud themselves for it, when they come sedately to compare it with St. Paul's discourse to the *Corinthians*. I am mistaken, if he that condemned them for saying, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas*, can be thought to have approv'd of their twitting and reproaching one another, *You are of Paul, and you are of Apollos, and you of Cephas*. 'Tis natural to suppose there was somewhat of this nature among them; they could not any of them easily glory, as they did, in one of their teachers, without reproaching their fellow christians for their adherence to others; and this I think he plainly

Sermon plainly enough hints and condemns, in his expression of their being *puffed up for one against another*.

And why should we, I pray, be denominated from *Arius*? Did we ever profess any particular veneration for him? Do we pretend, nay, do we not most positively deny, that we have received our opinion from him? How often have we deny'd our belief of the distinctive opinion of *Arius*? Is there any one assertion of the scriptures that we stick at? if there be, let it be produced, and the world will soon have a satisfaction. If they will charge us with holding any opinions, because they fancy them to be the genuine consequences of what we do hold; let them remember we are chargeable with no other consequences, than such as we our selves acknowledge to be genuine. If they are displeas'd with us, because we will not declare our assent to the tests which they propose in their own, and not in scripture-words; we hope 'tis some excuse, that tho' we scruple their authority, yet the reason why we do so, is, because we, in our poor judgments, apprehend the owning it would be derogatory to the authority of Christ.

In short, we glory not in men, ancient or modern, or in any other name but that of Christ: His disciples, and his *alone* we pretend to be. We neither do, nor will call any man upon earth *master*. Plain undisguised christianity, as 'tis contain'd in the scriptures, is the religion we profess. We set up in opposition to none, but are ready to receive all good christians, and join with all, so far as their worship is agreeable to the sacred rule; and according to that alone do we desire to order our own.

It

The Evil and Cure of Divisions.

139

Sermon

IV.

It has been artfully insinuated, that our design is here to preach upon speculative points, and to teach a new doctrine, and a new religion; than which nothing is farther from our intention. You can't but know, that 'twas never my custom among you to entertain my auditors with abstruse matters of speculation of any kind; and 'twas a more than ordinary importunity that prevail'd with me twice only to treat of such. And I have much satisfaction in looking back upon the general course of my preaching, which has been design'd to explain the holy scriptures, and inculcate the duties and virtues of the christian life; nor can I see reason for making any alteration in that respect. And therefore as we dreaded the division before it was made, and were very willing to have gone on in the way in which we were; so we profess we have no intention to alter our preaching, now the division is made, supposing that it should never be healed. I declare, I set not up in opposition to any opinion, or any men who do not invade my christian liberty, nor to teach any other religion than that which was from the beginning, and which I have taught all along from my first coming, when my indeavours were most acceptable.

We are far from envying any man his liberty of judging for himself, or choosing for himself that worship which he esteems to be most agreeable to the christian rule; and most gladly will we cultivate a good correspondence with all serious christians. And as we can never think such will be offended with a worship ordered according to the scriptures, so we shall always rejoice in their concurrence, however they may, in nice speculations, or doubtful disputations, differ from us, or from one another.

Sermon
IV.

I cannot, upon this occasion, forbear expressing the joy that I have had, in what has been lately done in the nation. I mean the happy step that was taken towards the making peace, and the opening a way for christians with more satisfaction to unite. I could never be pleased, that there should be a wall of separation between brethren, and was heartily glad to see so considerable a part of it taken down, as I always esteemed the act against *occasional conformity* to be. I was in hopes this would be a good introduction to concord; but I am sorry to find any who long'd to see that down, so very early beginning to set up another in the room of it.

May the God of peace and love, who has not left it in our power to prevent this separation, but has by his providence made us the first example of it, which is like, I fear, soon to be followed with more; may he, I say, make us a noble example of peace, that in us the world may see, how possible, how easy, and how amiable it is, for christians of various denominations, to forget those unhappy distinctions, and to bear with one another in little matters, that from our example they may learn, if it be the will of God, to *bold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.* Amen.

TWO

TWO
SERMONS:

The ONE on

JOHN I. 46.

The OTHER on

I CORINTHIANS iii. II.

THE
PREFACE.

THESE two sermons were preach'd in my own place, in January last, without any design of publishing them. But in a late journey to London I took them with me, and preached them there; upon which several of my friends earnestly press'd me to print them. The first of them they thought might have some good effect upon mens tempers, to cool them: and I was the more willing to yield to them, because I apprehended any thing of such a tendency must be peculiarly seasonable at this time, when some men are so warm in censuring and condemning their neighbours. As to this sermon,

The PREFACE.

sermon, I must request the reader to peruse it as a sermon preach'd to my own people; since he will meet with several things in it, as 'tis now printed, which I did not think proper to deliver in any other audience; and therefore, when I preach'd it in London, either alter'd them, or wholly left them out.

As to the other sermon, I was much more backward to print it, till I perceived my friends reasons were, that I might do justice to my self. I own I cannot think it deserves, or will well bear a publication, with the few alterations that I could allow my self to make in transcribing it, after it had been so very lately deliver'd from the pulpit. But I am sensible what the design of some men is, namely, to represent me as a Deist, and an enemy to revealed religion; tho' I profess most solemnly, that I cannot guess the occasion I have given them, except it be that I declare my self an enemy to every thing in religion, [which I can neither discover by the light of nature, nor can find revealed in my bible. Whatever help I can get from either of these, I gladly embrace; and I hope I use the best understanding I have, and neglect no proper means in the search. I shall be glad, if that hasty, popular composition may be a means to satisfy any unreasonably prejudiced against me, and such as I am, that I am as heartily desirous, as any of my neighbours, to preach Christ as the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners. But if neither this, nor the innocence of my behaviour, can satisfy some prejudiced persons, I pray God to forgive them, and am resolv'd, that by his help, I will not suffer them to break in upon the quiet and peace I have in my own mind.

I assure the reader, I am little moved with the treatment I shall now take some brief notice of; I mean what Mr. Bradbury has said in the preface to his late sermons. In this, and another late performance of his, he has not only loaded the majority of

his

his brethren in and about London, with undeserved reproaches; but has likewise thought fit to treat, in the most injurious manner, many gentlemen of distinguish'd rank and establish'd reputation among the dissenters. And in such company I can very easily bear my share of his wild and extravagant resentment. The pretence for his anger against me is, that among many who have born the character of orthodox, I should also cite Dr. Owen as asserting a subordination in the trinity. I set down eight passages from the Doctor, and upon the two first only he makes his remarks. The first is this: "There is an order, yea, a subordination in the persons of the trinity themselves; whereby the Son, as to his personality, may be said to depend on the Father, being begotten of him." Mr. Bradbury pretends this sentence is delivered by me naked and unguarded, disjointed, mutilated, and torn off. Mark now his wonderful reason: For the Doctor, says he, after those words immediately adds: "But that is not the subordination here aim'd at by Mr. Biddle, but that which he underwent by dispensation, as mediator, or which attends him in respect of his human nature." Mr. Bradbury has my thanks for clearing the matter. I assure him I did not mean that the Doctor was only for such a subordination as Mr. Biddle aim'd at, which would have been nothing to my purpose. The sentence here added, the more convincingly proves that the Doctor was for such a subordination as I plead for among the persons themselves, even antecedently to the Son of God's becoming man. Why then should my good friend lose his temper? He adds another passage of the Doctor's at some distance, which I suppose he hoped would so clear his meaning, as to reflect on my sincerity. 'Tis this:—"Our Saviour saith, my Father is greater than I, which he was, and

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“ is in respect of that work of mediation which
 “ he had undertaken ; but *inequalitas* [*inæqualitas*]
 “ *officii non tollit equalitatem* [*æqualitatem*] *naturæ*.
 “ He that was less than the Father, as to the
 “ work of mediation, being the father’s servant,
 “ is equal to him as a Son, as God to be blessed
 “ for ever.” *Now it is manifest, that I never de-*
sign’d to represent the Doctor as holding a subordinati-
on, and denying an equality. I have expresly provided
against this, West. Inquis. p. 138, 139. and charge
it upon the gentlemen I quote as an inconsistency, that
they hold both a subordination of persons, and equality of
nature ; which I humbly conceive is a contradiction :
and so I leave it with my friend to account for it.

Another injury, says he, is done to the memory
 of this great man, by the next quotation. In
 Mr. Peirce’s book it stands thus : “ ’Tis said that
 “ God made the world by him, denoting the sub-
 “ ordination of the Son to the Father.” *And if*
these are the Doctor’s words, where is the injury done
to his memory ? But hear what he says : But will not
any one be amazed to find that the whole passage
in the Doctor’s own work is this ? “ As ’tis said
“ that God made the world by him, denoting
“ the subordination of the Son to the Father ; so
“ also the word is said to make the world as a
“ principal efficient cause.” Is not my quotation
exact ? Have I said one word that the Doctor has not
said ? Who is it does most injury to the Doctor’s memo-
ry ; I by leaving out that part which manifestly dis-
covers the Doctor’s self-contradiction ? or Mr. Brad-
bury, who will needs be so officious as to add it ? If
God made the world by his Son, and that denotes a
subordination of the Son to the Father, then God is
the principal efficient cause, and the Son is a subordi-
nate cause ; or else I desire to be inform’d how the
Father’s making the world by him does denote, accord-
ing

ing to the Doctor, a subordination. And has not this man, think we, now a wonderful cause for his fearful out-cry? But let us hear the rest: These quotations are just as true as the insinuation that follows them: "These famous men are set up instead of the scriptures, for the standard of truth and orthodoxy."

And what is there amiss in that insinuation, or rather assertion? Let Mr. Bradbury inform us what is now made the standard of truth and orthodoxy. Certainly the scriptures are not; for if men keep ever so close to them, they are notwithstanding condemn'd as heterodox. If Mr. Bradbury does not know that an appeal is frequently made to such writers instead of the scriptures, he ought however to give those leave to speak who know better. I request him when he is at leisure to peruse an instance I gave of this nature, West. Inquis. p. 112. which I should have thought might have been a sufficient apology for my speaking as I did. He closes what he has to say of me with this polite and mannerly passage: To such freedom as this, I can say neither less nor more than what the reader will find, Psal. cxx. 2, 3, 4. I think 'tis pity but that the words of the Psalmist should be set down at length, that the good breeding and excellent temper of the gentleman may be manifest. They are these: Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. I am not conscious of the least design of misrepresenting Dr. Owen, or any man else, or of misapplying any sentence I have cited from them. But had I really been guilty of any thing of that kind, methinks Mr. Bradbury should have been the last man who should reproach me with it. For 'tis so familiar with him to cite testimonies

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merely according to sound, rather than sense, and the words of the Holy Ghost are so perpetually abused by him in this manner, that I could not reasonably expect he should first cast a stone at me. But as he throws at random, 'tis no wonder he does no execution. And certainly his invective will by all equal judges be esteem'd neither the more mannerly nor christian, upon the account of his profaneness in cloathing it with the words of the Holy Ghost. No doubt Mr. Bradbury is well pleased with the talent he has hitherto discovered of playing with the words of scripture; wherein he is certainly admirable beyond all the writers and preachers of the age. He had best therefore keep to that only; for I am mistaken if he will not find himself much out of his way, when he attempts to give the true sense of authors. He has so accustom'd himself to disregard this in the inspired writers, who ought to be treated with the highest veneration, that 'tis not likely he will ever treat any authors whatever in a better manner.

I am still the less concerned, when I observe that I am thus rudely insulted by one who exposes the religion of the blessed Jesus at the same time. For why should I expect better usage at his hands than what I see my great Master hath met with from him? I question whether Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, or any of the most avow'd enemies of christianity among Jews or Heathens, ever made more scandalous reflections upon our holy religion, than this gentleman has done in these very sermons. Let any one read what he says, pag. 39, 40. and judge whether he writes not like a person designing to favour the deists. The doctrines of the gospel are with him unaccountable; and the words of scripture which he sets down are all absurdities to the reason of man. Nay, he says expressly, that it [Christ's atonement] destroys every natural idea we have of divine justice. Was ever

any

any thing like this heard from one pretending himself a christian, and much more a minister of the gospel? Have not all christian writers, and among the rest Dr. Owen himself, endeavour'd to shew how agreeable the scripture doctrine is to the notions we have of divine justice? Nay, and does not the scripture let us know, that God set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, to declare his righteousness [or justice] that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus? How can any man sincerely believe the gospel, who judges thus of the doctrine of it? What a being must Mr. Bradbury represent to himself, when he thinks of one who is destitute of every thing which we include in the idea of justice? And can that revelation be from God which would thus represent him? You may as well suppose that a revelation from God should be design'd to teach us there is no God. I am sorry he goes on in the same strain: "I am of the same opinion with those who deny the satisfaction of Christ, that 'tis an irrational doctrine: I mean, it could never have been found out by any reason that is not divine, and it cannot be received by any reason that is not sanctified. I should no more have believed it than they do, by any thing that I could learn from the spirit of the world; but we have the spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. Lay aside the evidence of scripture, in the giving of which holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and the doctrine is so far from being true, that it is ridiculous." Can any thing be more extravagant and blasphemous than this rant? 'Tis indeed true, we could never have known the method of salvation declared in the gospel without a revelation; because it wholly depended upon the will and pleasure of God, whether any, or if any, what method should

be fixed upon : yet certainly now the method God has taken, is set before us in the gospel, it carries in it no absurdities to the true reason of man ; it destroys not so much as any one natural idea we have of divine justice ; but is so far from being irrational and ridiculous, that it approves it self intirely to the reason of all who fairly examine and judge of things. And will Mr. Bradbury be hardy enough to assert that every one who receives his notion of satisfaction, has the spirit of God, and has his reason sanctified ? Does he think it safe to lay such a stress upon the bare belief of any particular notion in religion, whatever it be ? But I don't wonder that salvation should be made so easy for men who must be supposed to have quitted every natural idea of divine justice, and to have embraced a ridiculous doctrine, as the ground of their hope of salvation. The Lord pity the souls of men, when they who pretend to be preachers, publish such things as these for gospel. Such assertions, deliver'd under a pretence of an extraordinary zeal for truth, are most pernicious to mens souls, as they tend to make them easy in a presumption of the goodness of their own state, while they are perhaps too like the God they represent to themselves, without any disposition we include in the natural idea of justice.

I was the more willing to take notice of that gentleman's performance, that I might give the reader a caution. Otherwise I had but little occasion to say any thing upon my own account, there being nothing material, besides rudeness, and his own blunders, in his charge against me. I suppose he has already done his best ; and therefore I flatter my self that I shall have no occasion of giving my readers any farther trouble about him, whatever trouble he may think fit to give himself about me.

May 5, 1720.

JOHN

JOHN I. 46.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

IF you look back to the 43d *verse* of this Sermon chapter, you there find an account of V. Christ's calling *Philip* one of his apostles. *This Philip findeth Nathanael*, as we read, ver. 45. *and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* In the words of the text, which next follow, we have *Nathanael's* answer, and *Philip's* reply: *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

The words are in themselves pretty plain, and need not that I should spend much time in telling you the meaning of them: Whatever is necessary to give light to them, will fall in as I go along, in the method I propose; which is only to offer you some useful observations from them, such as these that follow:

Observation I. The most innocent persons and things may be invidiously and reproachfully spoken of and treated in the world. 'Tis not possible to allege any instance, which will be a fuller proof of this observation, than the treatment our blessed Saviour, the Son of God, experienc'd while he was here on earth. Perfect

Sermon innocence and goodness met in him : He never
 V. *did any evil, neither was guile found in his mouth ;*
 his whole life was filled up with righteousness ;
 he yielded a constant and perfect obedience to
 all the commands of God ; and his carriage to-
 ward men was always not only intirely inoffen-
 sive, but most kind, beneficent, and obliging ;
 he *went about doing good* both to the bodies and
 souls of men ; curing men of all manner of dis-
 eases and infirmities, and giving them the most
 wholesome and profitable instructions ; and yet
 he could not escape the censure and obloquy of
 those among whom he lived. He was *despised and*
rejected of men, treated with all imaginable con-
 tempt and scorn ; and *indured the contradiction of*
sinners against himself. Through the whole course of
 his ministry was he loaded with reproach ; and
 no sooner did he shew himself to the world, but
 he incounter'd the malignity and fury of men.
 We need not go so far as the tragical conclusion
 of his life, to search for instances of this nature.
 Then indeed ignominy, reproach, and ill usage
 came upon him to the utmost degree ; but
 all along, thro' the course of his ministry, how
 was he reviled in the bitterest manner for the
 most useful works which he perform'd ! *Through*
Beelzebub, say they, the prince of devils, doth he
cast out devils. So that they represented him as a
 conjurer, one that acted in compact with the
 devil, the great enemy of mankind, while he
 was indefatigable in doing them the best offices.
 Nay, they said of him roundly, that he was a
 Samaritan, *and had a devil*, John viii. 48. They
 made every thing to serve for an occasion of
 reproaching him. His family, his brethren and
 kindred, the mean occupation of his reputed
 father, and wherein he himself seems to have
 been

been for some time employ'd, are turn'd against him by way of insult. *Is not this,* say they, *V.*
Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? John vi. 42. And again, Is not this the carpenter? Mark vi. 5. And is not this the carpenter's Son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him, Mat. xiii. 55, 56, 57.

Thus the place of his education and abode is likewise turned against him, as a matter of reproach. The providence of God was singularly concerned in so ordering matters, as that he should be born in *Bethlehem* in *Judea*; that the prophecy, which expressly fix'd that place for the birth of the *Messiah*, might be exactly fulfill'd, *Mic. v. 2.* But as his parents were there only occasionally, in order to their being tax'd, by which means the prophecy was accomplish'd, so that was not the place of his ordinary residence where he was brought up under them; for that was *Nazareth* in *Galilee*. And how was he insulted and scorn'd upon this account? Thus when *Nicodemus* ventured to speak in the behalf of Christ, the chief priests and the pharisees reply upon him, as they thought, very smartly, *John vii. 52. Art thou also of Galilee? search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* They were mistaken in their account, for *Jonah* was a prophet, and he was of *Gath-hepher*, *2 Kings xiv. 25.* and that was in *Galilee*. Had Jesus indeed been born in *Galilee*, he could not have been the *Messiah*, because he was to be born in *Bethlehem*, in the tribe of *Judah*: But since the prophecy, concerning the place where the *Messiah* was to be born, was so exactly ful-

Sermon fill'd in him; it ought not to have been any

V. offence to the scribes and pharisees, that he afterward lived much in *Galilee*; for they might have easily observed, that the same was certainly true of, at least two of the famous prophets of their nation, *Elijah* and *Elisha*. Nor indeed was it hard for them to discover from the prophet *Isaiab*, that the *Messiah*, when he came, was to live and preach much in *Galilee*. To which purpose we find the words of *Isaiab*, chap. ix. 1, 2, are applied by the evangelist, *Matth.* iv. 13, 14, 15, 16. And yet however consonant it was to their own prophecies, his being so much in *Galilee* is made an objection against him; and his enemies thought there was much of satyr and sharpness in that question, *Art thou also of Galilee?* As though they had said, "Canst thou be so stupid as to imagine, that any one who comes out of *Galilee*, can deserve to be regarded as a prophet? Canst thou be content to be reckond a disciple of one who pretends to be a prophet, tho' he arises out of *Galilee*?" By reason of our Saviour's living and preaching much in *Galilee*, he might, without any impropriety, be call'd a *Galilean*; but the country passing under a disgraceful character, his enemies gave him, and his followers for his sake, this name in a way of reproach. Thus *St. Peter* was upbraided with it, *Mark* xiv. 70. *Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.* And this was the name which the emperor *Julian*, the apostate, used familiarly to give Christ; calling him in a way of derision, the *Galilean*; And christians in like manner he used to scoff at under the title of *Galileans*.

And as *Galilee* in general was reckon'd a reproach to our Saviour, so was that particular city

in

in it wherein he dwelt, namely *Nazareth*. Jesus of *Nazareth*, however it served to distinguish our Saviour from all other persons, and therefore is a name used by his friends and followers, yet by his enemies was it given him by way of reproach. And to this purpose I think that passage is best expounded, *Matth. ii. 23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene*. If you look into all the prophecies of the old testament, you will not find in them any such expression as this used concerning the *Messiah* who was to come. Nor does the evangelist seem to quote any one particular prophet, or any prophetic expression; but to refer to the general sense of all the prophets, who spake before of the coming of Christ: And accordingly he does not say, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHEET*, as 'tis ordinary, when the words of one particular prophet are cited; but, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHETS*. And this I take to be the meaning, That all the prophets had foretold, that the *Messiah*, when he came, should be treated with ignominy, reproach, and contempt; and in order to the fulfilment of what they said, God so order'd it in his providence, that Christ should have his ordinary residence at *Nazareth*, a contemptible city in a despised country, in *Galilee*, that he might be contemptuously called a *Nazarene*.

You may see by what we have in the text, that the prevailing and common opinion of the place was so mean, that they could not easily be persuaded that any good thing could come out of it. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Now nothing was more agreeable than

Sermon than to give a despised and hated name to a
 V. despised and hated person; and hence they give
 him the name of *Jesus of Nazareth*, or *Jesus the Nazarene*; and so his disciples are reproachfully term'd, *The sect of the Nazarenes*, *Acts xxiv. 5.*

If we calmly and sedately examine the reason of things, the place of any person's abode can't be a just matter of reproach. A good man may live in any air or climate; and a judgment is to be formed of persons by quite different things. 'Tis really an evidence of a mean and low genius, nay, I think I may say of a base and fordid spirit, when men will oppose such as they do not like, not by strength of argument, but by reproachful and disgraceful names and titles. Why, I pray, might not an inhabitant of *Nazareth* be as good a man as an inhabitant of *Jerusalem*? Was all virtue and goodness shut up in *Jerusalem*? and all wickedness excluded from it? Could there be no saints but in one place of the world? and must they all be saints who lived there? Why then should Christ and his disciples be thus reproachfully called *Nazarenes*? Truly the reason seems plainly to have been this, That their enemies wanted somewhat to object, that should be a matter of real disgrace; and therefore they endeavour'd to do that by an odious name, which they were not able to do any other way; for a *Nazarene* was a term of reproach then, just as an *Arian* is now.

There is naturally in men a tenderness for self: mens interest, reputation, and particular opinions are very dear to them; and the greater degree of innocence there is in those who happen not to fall in with them in any of these respects, the more are they touch'd to the quick; and therefore when they see a necessity of opposing such

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such one way or another, and find no other way **Sermon**
of attacking them, they fall upon them in such **V.**
a mean and childish manner, rather than pounce 
at all.

There is a good use may be made of this ob-
servation. You, my brethren, are the disciples
and followers of the blessed Jesus, who met with
this vile treatment while he was here in the
world: And can you wonder if you do your
selves meet with the like? Should *the disciple be*
above his master? or the servant above his lord?
Is it not enough for the disciple that he be as his
master, and the servant as his lord? If they have
called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much
more may they call them of his household? **Matt. x.**
24, 25. If they have done these things in a green
tree, what may it be expected they will do in the
dry? If his perfect innocence and holiness would
not secure him from such reproaches and con-
tradiction of sinners, can you flatter your
selves that your very defective sanctification
will be sufficient to secure you? No certainly.
Consider him, therefore, who endured such contra-
diction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied
and faint in your minds, **Heb. xii. 3.** 'Tis your
honour to be like him; and if you are reproach'd
for his sake, happy are you; for the spirit of glory
and of God resteth upon you, **1 Pet. iv. 14.**

'Tis observable, as I hinted before, that how-
ever this name was given Christ by way of re-
proach, yet his disciples did not scruple to use
it themselves, as it served to specify and distin-
guish the person in whom they placed their
hopes; and therefore you see *Philip*, a friend and
disciple of Christ, calls him *Jesus of Nazareth*,
ver. 45. and the like is to be met with in other
places. Let men give us what name they please,
and

Sermon and reckon us of what sect they will, so long as

V. that is all the opposition that is made against us, and we can truly say our doctrine and worship is witnessed to by the apostles and prophets; let us glory in it, that *after that way which they call a heresy [or a sect] so we worship our God.*

Observ. II. A truly honest and good man may be involved in a common prejudice and mistake. *Nathanael* was certainly such an one; you have our Saviour's own testimony for it, in the next verse to the text; for when he *saw him coming to him, he said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* And yet 'tis evident he was led away with the common opinion at that time, and that opinion I may well say was a very great and dangerous mistake.

Certainly no mistake can be more dangerous, than for persons not to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*: and yet as this truth was but then beginning to be made manifest, we have here a good man who had not had an opportunity to see the evidence of it, and not only did not believe it, but seem'd to be intangled with the common prejudice, that it could not be true.

'Twas the common opinion, that nothing good could be expected to come out of *Galilee*, nor consequently out of *Nazareth*, a contemptible place in that country. This opinion, which prevailed among the vulgar, took its rise from the scribes and pharisees, the rulers and doctors of the church in that day. They who were to instruct and teach the people, and who might therefore be presumed to be intrusted with the keeping of divine truth, if any men at all were intrusted with it; they who thought themselves most secure of being always in the right, and counted it an high affront for any one to suppose the

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the common people could be in the right, and they in the wrong, and therefore spoke with much disdain of such an insinuation, *John vii. 47, 48, 49. Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the pharisees believed on him? but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed: I say, even these rulers of the people, famous for their skill and wisdom in divine matters, had embraced the notion, and diligently encouraged it, that whenever the Messiah came, he was to appear with great outward pomp and splendour, with the magnificence and grandeur of a mighty temporal prince, and was to subdue all the enemies of the Jews, and break all the earthly powers that hinder'd the gathering of Israel, and establishing them all in their own land, in a state of great power and glory. This notion then prevail'd among the Jews, and our Lord's own disciples labour'd under much of the same prejudice. This occasion'd the two sons of Zebedee to come to him with that petition, Mark x. 37. Grant unto us, that we may sit one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. This prejudice made his death prove so shocking to his followers, that they were ready to conclude they had been mistaken in taking him for the Christ. We trusted, say two of them, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, Luke xxiv. 31. Nay, when his apostles, the prime ministers in his kingdom, were gathered together to him after his resurrection, they could not divert their minds from the expectation of such a temporal glorious kingdom, speedily to be erected by him; and therefore they ask him that question, Acts i. 6. Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

Sermon

V.



It can therefore be no wonder, that at this time *Nathanael* should be hamper'd with the same prejudice, though he was *an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile*. He had not had the means whereby he might be inform'd; he had never seen, or been with *Jesus*; and the place, from whence *Philip* here tells him he came, pass'd under so bad a character, according to the notions which then prevail'd, and he had himself all along imbibed, that we cannot wonder he should be averse to the believing that *Jesus of Nazareth* could be the prophet that was spoken of by *Moses in the law, and by the prophets*.

Let me make two reflections before I leave this observation:

1. Christ expects from men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. Where men have means every way sufficient for their information, he looks for an answerable improvement; but where they have them not, he makes all due allowances. Our Saviour as well knew what *Nathanael* had said to *Philip* against his being the Christ, as he did what he had been doing under the fig-tree: He had as well heard him making a frivolous objection in the one case, as he had seen him acting the part of a sincere *Israelite* in the other; and yet, knowing that he was only mistaken for want of information, he does not condemn him; but declares him *an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile*.

'Twas in a very different manner he treated the scribes and pharisees, who had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles. He knew their prejudices were owing to their obstinate and implacable hatred of him; and therefore he never gives them the least commendation for their

sincerity, but charges them home with their hypocrisy ; telling them plainly they had not the love of God in them, that they believed not him whom the Father had sent ; and that if they believed not that he was the *Messiah*, they should die in their sins, &c.

Sermon V.



This may be a comfort to sincere and upright souls, who unfeignedly endeavour to know and do the will of God. If they have not really had the advantages which others have enjoy'd, yet if they have been diligent to improve those which have been afforded them, Christ will accept of less from them than from others. The involuntary mistakes which we may have fallen into, while we have sincerely endeavour'd to discover and conform our selves to the divine will, while we have not been wanting in a careful reading of the holy scriptures, and in fervent prayer to God ; I say, such kind of mistakes, even in matters of considerable moment, shall not be imputed to us by a kind and gracious Redeemer. And therefore,

2. This should teach us not to be hasty in judging others, and censuring them for not seeing the same that we do. There are many things which may dissuade us from this : Christ has most expressly forbidden it ; we invade an office that does not belong to us, when we are bold in this matter ; we are fallible creatures, and may perhaps be our selves in the wrong in that very doctrine, about which we censure our brethren for differing from us. But let it be suppos'd that we our selves are in the right, and our neighbours in the wrong, yet the judging persons for their mistake is a very nice affair, and requires a skill much beyond ours to meddle with it.

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V.

I desire to be understood to speak only of matters of opinion, and not of practice. We may safely say of such as live a notoriously wicked and ungodly life, that they cannot inherit the kingdom of God without a through repentance, because the scripture has expressly asserted the same; but in matters of opinion, there are so many allowances to be made many times for the strength of early prejudices, and the want of advantages for being better inform'd, that 'tis the hardest thing in the world for us to say, upon good grounds, that a person's mistake is inconsistent with the sincerity of his heart.

Let us put the case, that *Philip*, who was convinced, as you see, that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the promised *Messiah*, that he, I say, had been of the temper which is so common and ordinary in our day; how would he have judg'd *Nathanael* to be a perverse hypocrite, or a forlorn heretic, because he did not believe this great point, which is indeed a fundamental of the christian religion, and which no man, having the evidence laid before him, can deny without the utmost hazard of his soul? And yet such a judgment would have been very wrong; for at that very time he was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile. Thus, my brethren, we may imagine things are very plain to us; and it may be we are right in our judgment, and that is really a truth which we take to be so; yet tho' we are bound to embrace the truth as we see evidence of it, we are not bound to judge those who do not see things as we do. They may be *Israelites* indeed, in whom is no guile; and yet for want of some advantages which we have had, and which are perhaps more owing to some special turns of providence, than any prudent con-

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consideration of our own, they may not as yet perceive the truth; let us leave it to him who can judge the heart, to determine concerning them, whether they are not as sincere as our selves in seeking and searching after truth. Sermon V.

Observ. III. That may be a fundamental article of faith to one man, which may not be so to another. This observation, if it appear to be true, will be a farther reason why we should not be hasty in judging one another. 'Tis evident, that the believing Jesus of *Nazareth* to be the promised *Messiah*, is a fundamental article to those who are fully acquainted with the gospel; but yet you see it was not so at this time to *Nathanael*. We can't be saved, unless we believe this; but he, notwithstanding that he believed it not, when *Philip* told him of it, nay, though he objected and cavilled against it, was yet a very good man, and in a state of salvation; for he was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile; and all such must certainly be in a state of salvation. This soon became a fundamental article with reference to him, even as soon as he had the means of conviction and satisfaction afforded him; and so that which was not a fundamental when *Philip* talk'd with him, presently became so when he was with Christ.

Nothing can be properly and strictly a fundamental, but what is plainly revealed; and therefore I make no doubt that may be so to one man, that is not so to another; and that may be so at one time to the same man, that was not so a little before, and that too, even supposing the truth has been in general reveal'd or publish'd. Let me instance in a plain fundamental of the christian religion, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: Mens salvation is now

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laid

Sermon laid upon the belief of this ; but can we say that
 V. it always was so, ever since it was first plainly
 revealed ? I think it evident we cannot. Our
 Saviour had expressly revealed this before his
 death ; and so plainly said that the third day he
 should rise again from the dead, that his cruci-
 fiers were apprehensive of it, and did what they
 could to prevent it. Here then was a plain re-
 velation, and yet you find the apostles themselves
 believed it not ; nay, when they were after-
 wards told that it was true in fact, they believed
 it not ; but the report of it *seem'd to them as idle
 tales*, Luke xxiv. 11. But we do not think they
 were then in a state of damnation upon this ac-
 count : We allow a vast difference between the
 revelation that was made by our Saviour in his
 prediction ; and that which was made by the
 actual accomplishment, when they themselves
 became eye-witnesses of it.

In like manner, what may be a fundamental
 with reference to us protestants, who by the
 good providence of God have the free use of our
 bibles, for ought I know, might not be so to
 our ancestors before the reformation, when the
 bible was lock'd up from them, and they had not
 the advantage of such a free search and inquiry
 as we have, but were bred up in gross igno-
 rance, and thick popish darkness. A man that
 carefully reads his bible, would be apt to think
 that to be as plain a fundamental of the christi-
 an religion as any other ; that as there is but
 one God, so there is but one mediator between
 God and man ; and yet hard would it be for us,
 who could not be saved, if, having the light we
 have, we admitted of any other mediator, or
 indeavoured to come to God by any other ; I
 say, hard would it be for us, positively to assert
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that this was always so absolutely fundamental, Sermon
as that none could be saved, who in the times of V.
popish darkness, thro' mistake, join'd other
mediators with Christ.

Thus then I think we are to consider and
state this matter : Whatever is fundamental, must
not only be a truth, and revealed by God ; but
it must be a truth so far revealed to the person
to whom 'tis supposed to be a fundamental, as
that he is utterly inexcusable, and can't possi-
bly be sincere in his not seeing it. But in this
no man should be forward to judge another ; the
judgment should rather be left to God, and every
man's own conscience.

Give me leave to say on this occasion, that
there are some truths clear and plain enough
in the bible, so that a man who perceives them
would think, he that runs may read them, and
yet the art and sophistry of men has so darken'd
them with strange and unaccountable glosses,
that I make no doubt many sincere and upright
souls may miss of discerning them ; and without
question, a good and merciful God will make all
due allowances for such a case.

This therefore, according to what I urged un-
der the former observation, should be a caution
against rash and hasty judging in such cases.
And pray, my brethren, take me right : I don't
speak this for the direction of others, with refe-
rence to you, (I am not now instructing them,
as they do not hear me) but I speak it for your
direction. If you think you apprehend the truth
better than they do, meddle not with their sincere-
rity ; judge not them for differing in opinion from
you ; they may be sincere, tho' they do not per-
ceive the truth, supposing you are not mistaken
in your persuasion what is the truth.

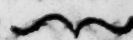
Sermon

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Observ. IV. God will take care to bring sincere *Israelites* out of such their errors and mistakes, as it would be destructive and ruinous to them to continue in. The observation is, I think, fair, from the account we here have of *Nathanael*: He did not believe that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the Christ. Such an error as this he could not have continued in without ruin; for unless he believed this, when the thing came to be more notoriously published and confirmed, he must, with the scribes and pharisees, have died in his sins. But, notwithstanding his unbelief in this point upon the testimony of *Philip*, being an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile, our Saviour took a particular care to convince him of his error; which was an error of great importance, and would afterward have been of the greatest possible; he took care to bring him to a belief and acknowledgment of the contrary truth. You may here observe too, how kindly he applies himself to him, in order to his conviction: He does not use severe and rough methods with him; he does not reproach and upbraid him with his not believing a truth of so great importance; but he begins with a commendation of his sincerity, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* *Nathanael* was conscious of his own sincerity, and therefore could not but wonder that *Jesus* should have such a knowledge of him, who had never seen him before. He did not believe that he was the true *Messiah*, and was not apprehensive that he was able to see into his heart, and to know the disposition thereof; and therefore he says to him, *Whence knowest thou me?* Our Saviour, no doubt, spake as he did to *Nathanael*, with a design to draw this question from him, that so he might satisfy him by his answer, that he

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he was indeed that prophet. And by his answer he lets him know, that he was well acquainted with a secret transaction, which *Nathanael* could not but well remember, wherein he had been acting the part of an *Israelite* indeed : *Jesus answer'd, and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* And by this means a conviction was effectually wrought, *ver. 49. Nathanael answered, and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.*

We need not wonder, that men who are truly sincere, should be thus safe and secure, with reference to all really destructive and damning errors and mistakes. Their own happy disposition lays them open to conviction, and facilitates the entrance of truth into their minds. Sincerity bespeaks the mind to be free from such mean desires, base interests and designs, as do corrupt, and, I may say, bribe, as it were, the will ; and make a person unwilling to perceive things any otherwise than as he would have them be. But where a person is sincere, he has no other interest at heart but to discover the truth ; and he who is so impartial, is most likely to give it a ready reception, and to recover himself out of any considerable mistakes he may have fallen into, whenever proper evidence is laid before him. And beside that, great is the regard which we are assured God bears to such, and the concern he has for them ; and a security they have by his promises, whereby he has engaged himself to lead and guide them. Our Saviour speaks of this as the best way to be secure of the divine conduct, *John vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.* Many assu-

Sermon rances we have in the scripture, of such persons
 V. being under a special blessing and direction from
 God. *The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will be teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies. What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant, Psal. xxv. 9, 10, 12, 14.* And since upright and sincere men are assured of an happy end, it must be supposed that they are assured of such a guidance as is necessary, in order to the attaining it; and consequently they must be secure, that a good and faithful God will not leave them in destructive and damning mistakes. *Psal. xxxvii. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* But this can't be true, but the end of such may be misery and woe to the utmost degree, if they can't depend upon God that he will assist them in their sincere indeavours, lead them into all necessary truth, and preserve them from all destructive mistakes.

This observation may, I think, very well serve,

I. To recommend sincerity, as most worthy to be pursued by all. If we are, like *Nathanael, Israelites* indeed, in whom is no guile; we are then secure of the divine conduct. And can any thing be more advantageous to us? How liable are such weak and short sighted creatures to err and mistake! must it not then be a great happiness to be secured, that though we should mistake, it shall not be so as to hazard our eternal salvation? This is the case of those that are sincere: And this should quicken us all in using our utmost indeavours to be such, and to become

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more and more so, to purge out more and more Sermon
the remains there may be in us of guile and V.
hypocrisy.

2. This may serve to make such easy and peaceable in their own minds, whose consciences bear witness to their sincerity. *If your hearts do not condemn you* in this respect, then may you well *have confidence towards God*, 1 John iv. 21. If you know that you are sincerely willing to know and do the will of God, that in order hereunto you have been lifting up holy hands to God, made this the matter of your fervent prayer, that God would lead you into all saving truth, and have set your selves with all impartiality and diligence to search after the truth, as it is in Jesus; so that you can say, if we are mistaken, 'tis not owing to any slothful indifference to truth, to an unwillingness to search after it, or discover it, lest it should make us uneasy in any of the courses we take; I say, if you know this concerning your selves, distrust not the goodness and faithfulness of God, the kindness and compassion of your redeemer toward you; depend upon it, that you shall be led into all necessary and saving truth. And therefore be not moved with the rash censures of men; they may wound themselves, but they can't hurt you by their hard speeches. The holy scripture pronounces your course to be safe, Prov. x. 9. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*: and you may rest satisfied in that determination, let who will differ from it.

Observ. V. Great good may sometimes be found, where 'tis little expected and look'd for. Thus it was in the case of *Nathanael*. You may easily imagine he had but little expectation of advantage, when he was coming to see Jesus of

Sermon *Nazareth*, since he came under the power of such a prejudice, that no good thing could, or however that it was at least very unlikely, that any good thing should come out of *Nazareth*; and yet what greater good could he meet with, than what he actually found? He found the *Messiah*, he found a Saviour, where he had no such expectation.

Thus is it sometimes order'd by the providence of God on other occasions. Men come to see and hear out of mere curiosity, without the least thought of receiving any advantage; nay, it may be, to laugh and scoff at the preacher and his doctrine; and they are surpriz'd by God's preventing goodness and mercy: They come with levity of spirit, and are sent away with a full, a sorrowful, and broken heart; they come to divert themselves, and God makes them (such is the freeness and riches of his grace) in good sadness to lay to heart their need of a Saviour, and draws them to him: And thus they meet with what they little thought of or expected. Would to God this might be the happy effect of the curiosity of some who come with prejudice among us. I am confident, whatever the representations are, which are made of us, we have no other design than what *Philip* had upon *Nathanael*, and what every faithful minister must have upon those he preaches to, to bring them to Christ, that they may have him for their Saviour. And may that God, who alone can draw men to his Son, say *Amen* to our indeavours, that we may be indeed successful in promoting this blessed design.

Observ. VI. The way to know the certainty of things, is to make trial of them: *Come and see*. This was the best advice that could possibly be given.

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given. *Nathanael* was in doubt, and could not easily suppose that any good thing could come out of *Nazareth*. Well, let it be ever so unlikely, and though you have no expectation, yet *come and see* ; examine, search, and try ; and judge not before you have done so. Was it not wisdom in *Philip* to give this counsel ? and was it not prudence in *Nathanael* to take it ? Had he given way to his prejudices, had he been awed by a deference to ecclesiastical rulers, and, for fear of offending them, refused so much as to come, he had miss'd of the greatest satisfaction he could desire on earth, even the seeing the Lord's Christ. Tho' he had a strong prejudice, yet he could not but see that such pretences as our Saviour made, deserv'd to be look'd into, and carefully examin'd. And this is a rule which we may safely give with reference to all points of doctrine, and more especially where honest men offer any thing to the world : *Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good*, 1 Theff. v. 21. They that distrust the force and evidence of truth, or the goodness of the cause they would maintain, may propose a different rule, and tell you, that you should prove nothing, but hold fast what fallible men have taught you. I must own, I know no principle of my religion that will not bear a strict examination, and thorough inquiry ; and therefore my business shall always be to appeal to the understandings and consciences of men. You hear how we are reviled, slander'd, and abus'd. According to the general vogue, nothing good is to be expected from us : Would you know whether our principles or worship are such as men confidently report ? *Come and see* ; see with your own eyes, and judge for your selves ; and take not things blindly upon trust

V.

Sermon trust from those who are afraid to see them-

V. selves, and therefore resolve never to look into matters, but sit down contented with the traditions of their fathers. *Come and see*, whether we say any thing but what is agreeable to the rule of our holy religion: Search the scriptures, and see whether the things that we speak are according to them, or not.

Observ. VII. Every one who is a true disciple of Christ, has such a conviction of his excellency, as that he cannot but be earnestly desirous of bringing others under the same, that they may likewise become his disciples. Thus *Philip*, when he was called by Christ, and become his disciple, with joy and triumph acquaints *Nathanael* with the happy discovery he had made, in order to ingage him to believe in Christ, as he did himself. *We have found him*, says he, *ver. 45. of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* And when *Nathanael* could not easily come into such a belief, because of the place from whence Jesus came, he does not presently give over, but presses him to *come and see*. In like manner, no sooner had our Saviour convinced the woman of *Samaria* that he was the Christ, but she was desirous of bringing others under the same conviction, and therefore hastens to her neighbours, and calls upon them; *Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* John iv. 29. Both a regard to the honour of our Redeemer, and a concern for the salvation of mens souls, should ingage us to do what we can to bring men to the true knowledge of Christ, and an unfeigned subjection to him. And as we profess our selves the disciples and followers of Christ, let us make this our aim and endeavour,

and

and so evidence our selves to be sincere in our Sermon
profession. We may put men upon considering V.
and weighing the proofs of his doctrine, the ex-
cellency of his design, the greatness of his love,
his ability to help and save us, which may be
great inducements to them to submit to him.
But to close all, there is one way, which we
should each of us take to recommend him and his
religion to others ; and that is, by endeavouring
to live up to the rules he has given us. When
we are circumspect and unblameable, meek and
patient, this redounds to the honour of our great
Lord. And the apostle's prayer for the *Thessa-*
lonians, 2 Theff. i. 11, 12. we should make our
own, for our selves and one another ; and with
that I conclude: *Wherefore also we pray always for*
you, that our God would count you worthy of this
calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness,
and the work of faith with power ; that the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and
ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the
Lord Jesus Christ. Amen,

A
S E R M O N

O N

I CORINTHIANS iii. II.

*For other foundation can no man lay,
than that is laid, which is Jesus
Christ.*

Sermon
VI.

SO unspeakably great are the things which Christ has done for us, and the obligations which he has thereby laid us under to himself, that no true christian can be without a concern for his honour and glory. The apostles are an excellent example to us herein, as they always discover'd a particular sense of his love, and zeal for his honour in the world: And we must be very unworthy of the name of christians, should we not in some measure resemble them in their temper, and most earnestly desire in all things to exalt and magnify him. Thus we see St. Paul behaved himself, when the *Corinthians* were divided about their teachers, one crying up one, and another another; and were ready to denominate themselves from the particular teachers to whom they adhered. He calls them to consider the one master to whom they belong'd, and whose disci-
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ples they were, and that ministers were to be look'd upon as only acting under him, and that their business was to direct men to Christ. Sermon VI.

At ver. 9. of this chapter, the apostle speaks of himself, and those imploy'd in the same office, as labourers together with God; or, as I think it should rather be render'd, of God; that is, they were all together fellow labourers whom God imploy'd and made use of: And of the Corinthians who were christians, he speaks as of God's husbandry, and God's building. Upon this latter comparison he dilates in the following verses. 'Tis common in the epistles to represent christians as an house, a building, a temple, an habitation; and the like we may observe in this place. Now says the apostle in the foregoing verse, *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.* Then follow the words of the text: *For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;* which I take to be a kind of parenthesis, in which he supposes, or takes it for granted, that those who opposed him among the Corinthians, preach'd Christ as a foundation, and pretended to build upon him, though they built not rightly, as he more plainly intimates in some following verses of the chapter.

Now when the apostle says, *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,* his meaning seems to be this; that he did not suppose any one who pretended to be a christian teacher, or instructor, would alter the foundation laid among them, or attempt to set up any other person instead of Christ. He took it for granted, that the person who opposed him, and

Sermon and had wound in himself among them, did so far go upon the same foot he had done, that he made no change in the only foundation, which is Jesus Christ.

In speaking to the words, I will

I. Consider how Christ is said to be laid as a foundation.

II. Shew you that he is the only good foundation that can be laid, and that 'tis unreasonable to suppose men should attempt to lay any other.

I. I am to consider how Christ is said to be laid as a foundation. And,

1. There is a sense in which the laying Christ as a foundation is peculiar to God himself; and accordingly it is attributed to him in the holy scriptures, *Isaiah xxviii. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: He that believeth shall not make haste.* The apostles have cited this passage, and applied it to Christ, *1 Pet. ii. 6. Rom. ix. 33.* And when the *Psalmist* speaks of this matter, *Psal. cxviii. 23.* he says, *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.*

When we speak of a foundation laid in this sense, we have a regard to Christ consider'd as the great gift of God, and appointed by him to be the Saviour and Redeemer of men, as God has set him forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and constituted him the only foundation upon which we are to build our hopes of pardon, acceptance, and eternal salvation. But tho' this is a great truth, and will afterwards fall in as an evidence of what I shall insist upon; yet I don't believe,

believe, 'tis what is here directly and chiefly intended. And therefore, Sermon VI.

2. I think St. Paul speaks of Christ as a foundation laid by himself, in his preaching him as such. In the foregoing *verse* the apostle speaks of himself as having laid a foundation. *I have, says he, as a wise master builder laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon:* And accordingly in the text he is to be understood, *Other foundation can no man* [that is, no christian preacher or minister] *lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;* that is, no man can lay any other foundation than that which I have already laid in my preaching, which is Christ. When we speak of Christ laid as a foundation in the former sense, we consider him as to his person and sufferings; but here, when the apostle speaks of his own laying Christ as a foundation, 'tis evident he refers to the doctrine he taught concerning him. Now this the apostle preach'd as the foundation: that is,

1. As that which is absolutely necessary for persons to know and believe. And it seems evident to me, that there must be some doctrinal principles that must be fundamental in christianity, and essentially necessary to be believed. Christianity is to be consider'd as a religion; and if there are not some things belonging to it that are fundamental and essential, how can it be distinguish'd from any other religion in the world? Every religion must have its peculiar form, and be founded upon some proper maxims or principles. If you consider natural religion, the foundation of it is the belief of a God, who is the proper object of our worship, and who rewards his worshipers: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that*

Sermon *that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6. And whatever religion pretends to have revelation for its original, must of necessity pretend some peculiar tenets, whereby 'tis render'd different from any other religion. Thus the *Jewish* religion must suppose this foundation, that God spake by *Moses*, and gave the law by him: And so in like manner must there be some foundation of christianity, whereby it must be essentially distinguish'd from every other religion in the world. Now 'tis plain, that the doctrine concerning Christ is such a foundation. A man cannot be a christian, that does not believe the great things which we are taught by revelation concerning him, such as that he is the *Messiah* or the Christ, the anointed of God, whom he has commission'd and appointed to be the instructor, teacher, and Saviour of the world; that he is the Son of God, whom by consequence we are to hear, whose doctrine we are to believe, and whose commands we are to obey. And not only are we to believe this general account of him, but likewise the particular things which are related concerning him, and the way and manner in which he accomplishes our salvation, even by his death and sufferings, that *he was deliver'd for our offences, and died for our sins, &c.* Thus St. Paul lets us know, that this was the sum of his preaching; it being what he very much insisted on as absolutely necessary to be known and understood by all, 1 Cor. i. 23. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* And chap. ii. 2. *I determin'd not to know any thing among you [I made profession of no other science or learning, but what is comprised in this one thing] but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

And the very notion of a foundation plainly carries this in it, that it is somewhat absolutely necessary. You may as well suppose that a house can be built without a foundation, as you can suppose that a person can be a christian without the knowledge of Christ, without believing him to be the Saviour of the world.

2. As this is absolutely necessary, so here men must begin. There are many things necessary in a building, with which nevertheless men do not begin. A house can no more be without a roof, than without a foundation; but yet the foundation is laid first of all, and the roof at last. And thus when St. Paul speaks of his laying a foundation in his preaching, and tells us that foundation is Jesus Christ; 'tis evident he must be understood to speak of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, with which he endeavour'd to acquaint men. In all arts and sciences, there are some things necessary to be peculiarly inculcated at first, when a person enters upon the learning them: And so 'tis with reference to christianity. And therefore, as the apostles in their preaching, made it their business first to instruct men in the doctrine of Christ, to preach him as the *Messiah*, the Saviour of the world, who died for their sins, and rose again from the dead; so you see they insist upon the belief of this, with those whom they received into the church of Christ, putting it to them, whether they believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, or not. Hence the author of the *epistle to the Hebrews*, chap. vi. 1. speaks of *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, which he likewise calls *the foundation*.

3. As Christ is represented as the foundation, so it is suppos'd that all the other doctrines which

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Sermon christians receive, are to be built as a super-
 VI. structure upon him. The believing that Jesus
 is the Christ, the Son of God, will naturally
 infer the belief of all that doctrine which he
 came into the world to reveal and make known
 to men. Nor can men, when they are con-
 vinced of this, be insensible of his authority, or
 of the reasonableness of their yielding a ready
 obedience to all his commands and precepts.
 So that nothing is more proper than to begin
 with the doctrine concerning Christ, and to lay
 that down, as St. Paul did, as the foundation
 upon which he would afterward build in his
 preaching. To this purpose he discourses in
 some verses which follow the text : *Now if any
 man, that is, any minister or preacher of the
 gospel, build upon this foundation, namely Christ,
 gold, silver, precious-stones, wood, hay, stubble ;
 every man's work shall be made manifest. For the
 day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by
 fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work of
 what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he
 hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward :
 If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss :
 but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire.*
 Where he plainly supposes, that while men kept
 to this foundation, they might mistake in some
 things of lesser importance ; they might build
 upon this foundation such things as would not
 indure the trial, and be of any service, how-
 ever they might not prove ruinous and destructive
 to them. 'Tis a plain case, that a wide diffe-
 rence ought to be made between what is, and
 what is not fundamental in our holy religion ;
 and a mistake in drawing a consequence from a
 revealed truth is nothing near so criminal, as the
 making that a fundamental which God has not
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made so. Where men have not an exprefs and Sermon
plain revelation, they should be very cautious VI.
in their assertions. 'Tis very possible they may
be building only *wood, hay, and stubble* upon the
foundation, when they imagine they are building
upon it *gold, silver, and costly stones.*

II. I come now to the other part of my
discourse, which is to shew that as Christ is the
foundation, so he is the only one; and that no
man can lay any other. When the apostle says,
no man can lay any other foundation, he is not
to be understood absolutely to deny the possibi-
lity of any man's attempting to lay any other
foundation. We see this is false in fact: *Mahomet*
attempted to lay another foundation; and this
has been done many times in the world. But we
must understand him as intending either that no
man can lay any other good foundation; or else,
which I rather incline to, that no man, that is,
no such man as he is speaking of, no one who
calls himself a christian, and pretends to be a
minister of the gospel, can be thought to intend
to lay any other foundation than Christ: It must
be thought, that as he professes himself a christian
minister, he goes upon the supposition of Christ's
being the only foundation, and that consequently
he must in his preaching build upon him as such.
Now here let it be considered,

1. That the great reason why no other foun-
dation can reasonably be pretended, or be at-
tempted to be laid by any man, is because God
himself has laid no other. Nothing can be fit
to be a foundation for us, but by the divine
appointment. As we are rebellious creatures,
it must belong to that God whom we have of-
fended, to fix the terms of our reconciliation to
himself, and our eternal salvation; and no one

Sermon can have any right to prescribe to him. His VI. commands require of us a personal obedience, and the sanction of his law threatens the guilty personally : And 'tis at his pleasure, whether he will accept of any mediation, or regard the interposition of any person who would be willing to act in our behalf. Justice does no ways oblige him to dispense with the execution of the threatening upon the person of the transgressor ; and if he is willing to deal with us upon any gracious terms, it must certainly belong to him to appoint them ; and to fix upon the person who shall undertake our cause, and whom he will please to accept. It must be his right to judge who is fit for such an undertaking ; and to prescribe in what way he shall manage it. If we could (as we cannot) offer him an equivalent, he might refuse it. But when he has actually appointed a mediator, and but one, it must be monstrous folly for any person to think of another. He has himself laid in *Sion* a foundation, a chief corner-stone, elect and precious ; and he has laid but one : Who then shall pretend to mention or preach any other ? or who can have assurance enough to warrant men of success, if they are built upon any other ? As *there is but one God*, so *there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. 'Tis only by this Mediator that we can draw nigh to God ; and *thro' him alone can we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. So far are we from being able to assure men of pardon, and the favour of God, if they depend upon any other, that we can most certainly assure them of the contrary ; and that *there is salvation in no other*, there being *none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12.

2. No man that pretends to be a christian minister, can attempt to lay another foundation without the most notorious inconsistency. He that professes himself a christian, thereby professes himself to be built upon Christ as his foundation: And would it not be great absurdity and folly, for a man to recommend to others in his preaching a different foundation from that, upon which he declares he chooses to build himself? 'Tis not to be thought that men will purposely expose themselves; and yet, where the absurdity is so gross and palpable as in the present case, they must needs see this will be the consequence, and therefore 'tis not easy to imagine they can take such a foolish course.

3. No preacher can lay any other foundation in his preaching, because he cannot, with any face, produce any tolerable evidence and assurance of the goodness and sufficiency of any other foundation. The reason why I am to pay a regard to Christ as the foundation of my faith, is because the signs and miracles which were wrought by him, and the other concurring testimonies that accompanied him, fully evidence that he was a teacher sent of God, such an one as cannot deceive and impose upon me. He is therefore, as he is called, *a sure foundation*, upon whose word I may infallibly depend. But is this true concerning any other, whom men can pretend to substitute in his room? The church of *Rome* indeed pretends to be infallible in her dictates: But the pretence is shameful; and nothing is clearer than the confutation of her pretended infallibility, by the multitude and grossness of her errors. Nay, since they themselves own Christ as the foundation, and pretend to derive their infallibility from him, we may

Sermon safely reject their authority, which tends plainly
 VI. enough to overthrow the foundation, they pretend to build upon; and since he is own'd on both sides to be infallible, we may safely disown the authority and infallibility of a church that contradicts him.

Nor are there any men in the world so wise or good, as that we can safely depend upon their judgment or testimony, and make them our foundation. They are severally, and together in a body or council, liable to err; and if we depend upon them, may lead us wrong as well as right. Upon Christ therefore alone are we to rest as our foundation, and him only are ministers to lay as a foundation in their preaching.

There are two objections which may be made against what I have said, and which I shall briefly answer.

I. It may be said, how can it be true that Christ is the only foundation, and that ministers are to preach no other, since the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, chap. vi. 1. speaks so expressly of repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, as a foundation? and are not ministers to preach these?

I answer, these may be called a foundation in a sense, but not in the same sense wherein Christ is called a foundation. They are a foundation, as they are duties made absolutely and fundamentally necessary to salvation; and so in that respect may be a ground of hope and comfort to us. But if they were a foundation in the same sense Christ is, they must not only be necessary, but must be accepted for their own sake: Whereas this is not true, our repentance and faith at best being so defective, as to need pardon;

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pardon; and the reason why they are accepted is the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of God's accepting these being made to us in and through Christ. So that these duties are not, as Christ is, the primary foundation; but themselves rest, and are built upon Christ as the only foundation in that sense.

2. It may be objected, How can St. Paul speak of Christ as the only foundation, when he elsewhere himself calls the *apostles* and *prophets* the foundation? Eph. ii. 20. And does not Christ himself speak of *Peter* as a *rock*, that is, a foundation, upon which he would build his church?

I answer, This does not interfere with Christ's being represented as the only foundation, because the apostles and prophets were not a foundation themselves; but as Christ by them declared and deliver'd his doctrine: They were not any farther a foundation or a rule for others than as Christ spake by them. When he did not, the chief apostle might be mistaken, and might be withstood to the face, as you know he was, Gal. ii.

11. And therefore this really confirms it, that Christ is the only foundation that can be laid; to which purpose also we may observe how St. Paul expresses himself in the place alleg'd, Eph. ii. 20. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Christ therefore is himself the great support, upon which the whole building rests: And the apostles are a foundation only as used and imployed by him in building his Church. And thus was that place concerning *Peter* understood by several of the ancients. *

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* Thus Tertullian: In ipso ecclesia exstructa est, id est, per ipsum. The church was built upon him, that is, by him. De pud-

Sermon VI. I shall conclude with three reflections on what hath been said.

1. If Christ is the only foundation that can be laid, then must it be your duty to adhere to him as such. You are to look upon your selves as the disciples and servants of one master, even of Christ; and you are not to be the servants of men, Christ alone has the dominion over your faith, His word you are to receive, believe, and obey with all readiness of mind; but to the words of any men upon earth you are not oblig'd to yield any such subjection and regard. Since inspiration has ceased, and Christ speaks infallibly to us only in his word; 'tis there you are to expect to hear him, and know what he says. But as to men, you are to look upon your selves as standing, in this case, on equal terms with them: They and you are both to study the revelation which Christ has left to the world; you are to use your faculties as well as they theirs. The natural consequences of what he has deliver'd, so far as you see them to be such, you must, and if you believe him, you cannot but receive. But you are not to take doctrines from men upon a trust to their judgments. The word of Christ is to dwell richly in you; and you are daily to search the scriptures, and try your faith in divine matters by them.

2. If Christ is the only foundation which can be laid, then let all your hope and confidence toward God be built and establish'd upon him; and

pudicitia, cap. 21. Thus again the author of the sermon, De fide Petri apostoli, which is the xlvii. of those printed with St. Ambrose: Petra dicitur, eo quod primus in nationibus fidei fundamenta posuerit. He is therefore called a rock, because he first laid the foundation of the christian faith among the Gentiles,

and do you look for the mercy of God only upon his account, and for his sake. The scripture has passed a severe doom upon those who do not believe in him, and who neglect his mediation. And miserable indeed must the case be of all who have had the means of knowing him afforded them, and yet at last shall be found in the number of unbelievers. How dreadful must it be for us to appear, as we all shortly must, before an almighty, tremendous, and provoked God, without having any part in the only mediator! Can we imagine a guilty wretch will be able to lift up his face before the God who made him, and whose laws he has broken, when he can't have this Saviour to appear for him, and to be his advocate in judgment? Will not his case be most doleful, when he must stand before Christ as his judge, and behold him the most tender but injur'd friend, turn'd to an angry, severe and terrible enemy? We can never have confidence in the great day, unless our hope is fixed on this mediator; nor can we, while we live in the world, have any tolerable ground for confidence with reference to that day, when ever we think of it, but as we are built upon this foundation. How is it that we can go to God, or offer up any of our services to him, so as to hope that they shall be acceptable, but only thro' Jesus Christ? What other name can we plead for any of the blessings and benefits we ask of God? This foundation is laid by God in *Sion*, in order to our believing on him, *Isa. xxviii. 16.* *1 Pet. ii. 6.* and if we are a spiritual house, we must be built upon him, *1 Pet. ii. 5.* *In him must we be builded, for an habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22.* Let it be seriously consider'd,

Sermon sider'd, that now God has laid this precious
 VI. corner-stone, this foundation in *Sion*, if men neglect to build upon him, he will prove *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* to them, *1 Pet. ii. 8.* and as they stumble and fall on this stone, they shall be broken; but hereafter it will fall on them, to grind them to powder, as our Saviour speaks, *Matt. xxi. 44.* that is, he will utterly destroy them; they shall be crushed by him; and, according to the expression, *Psalms ii. 9.* be dashed in pieces by him like a potter's vessel.

3. Since Christ is the only foundation of all our hopes, let him be most precious to us. This use St. *Peter* teaches us to make of this consideration; for having spoken of Christ under this notion, and the advantage christians have by believing on him, he immediately adds, *1 Pet. ii. 7. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.* He is most worthy of our best esteem, who has done so much for us, and upon whom all our hopes rest for eternity. And it must be our duty to study his excellencies, and endeavour to know more of his love, that so we may be the more sensible of the goodness of that foundation upon which we are built; and careful should we be that we entertain not the least unworthy thought of him.

Give me leave here to caution you against an error, which I take to be very injurious and disparaging to this Mediator, who is the only foundation of our hope toward God; and that is the opinion of *Socinus* and *Sabellius*, which allows not really to our Saviour any distinct nature beside the human. While they suppose the presence only of the supreme God, with the man Christ

Christ Jesus, they in effect deny any vital union of human flesh with that divine nature which the scripture gives us an account of. They seem to me really to make the Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God, by whom God made all things, to be only a meer name, and to allow him no being at all. And is not this highly injurious to our Redeemer? What is this but to deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? And what a strange notion must we then have of this foundation which God has laid in Sion?

But though we are not in our censures to bear hard upon men who involuntarily, and so honestly mistake; yet let us, my brethren, endeavour to entertain high and honourable thoughts of this our glorious Redeemer, conceiving of him according to what the scriptures represent him to be, the beloved of the father, who had a glory with him before the world was, the person by whom he made the worlds, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, *by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; by and for whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist:* A person who *was in the form of God; but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Let us raise our thoughts of his innate greatness, that we may the more admire his condescending goodness in submitting to take part with us in our flesh and blood, and to die an ignominious and accursed death, the death of the cross. Let us consider him, who having died

Sermon died for us, is now raised again, and exalted to
VI. the highest glory and honour, and is at the right
 hand of God, making intercession for us in the
 virtue of his death. And when we thus consider
 him, we shall be the more easily satisfied of the
 reasonableness of our hope in him; we shall be
 the more sensible of the stability and immovea-
 bleness of that foundation upon which all our
 hopes are established for time and for eternity;
 and so to us who believe he will be precious.

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Christ's Kingdom advanc'd by **PEACE.**

A
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Preach'd at

E X O N,

January 30, 1722.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the hard things which use to be said by too many on the 30th of January, might be a sufficient apology for a man's taking the same opportunity to plead the cause of the guiltless; yet when it was first resolved to transfer our lecture this week to that day, I had no design of attempting any thing of that nature, it being consider'd only as a day whereon people are more at leisure to attend. But when the subject here insisted on, offer'd it self afterwards to my thoughts, I judg'd it might be unseasonable neither
for

The PREFACE.

for the day, nor the present state of christianity among us: For I think nothing can be more proper with respect to both, than an indeavour to allay heats and animosities. In doing this, I hope I have guarded against any thing that will offend the friends of religion, and the present government. If the sermon shall be of use to cool mens tempers, and to promote peace and charity, its end will be obtain'd; if not, while it has what I fear is the common fate of many other and better sermons, both preach'd and publish'd, to be lost; it may yet be a testimony of the good intentions of the preacher.

Exon, Feb. 1,
1722.

ISAIAH

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ISAIAH XI. 13.

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

IN the former part of this chapter we have **Sermon**
 a noble prophecy of the *Messiah*, and his **VII.**
 qualifications for his office, and of the hap-
 piness and enlargement of his kingdom. 
 And as he is styl'd by this prophet, *The prince of*
peace, and it is foretold concerning him, that of
the increase of his government and peace there should
be no end, Isa. ix. 6, 7. so here when the prophet
 would set forth the time of the increase of his
 government, he represents it as a time of great
 peace, when the roughest tempers should be
 tamed, and the most savage should be civiliz'd;
 when the *wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the*
leopard should lie down with the kid, &c. ver. 6.
 And thus the prosperous times of the *Messiah's*
 kingdom are describ'd in the text, as abounding
 with peace, and more especially with internal
 peace: *The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and*
the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim
shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex E-
phraim.

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Sermon

VII.

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The words seem to be a prediction of the happy union of the *Israelites* under the *Messiah* their king, *Ephraim* and *Judah* comprehending all *Israel*. They anciently made but one kingdom under *David* and *Solomon*; but in the next reign under *Rehoboam* they became divided into two kingdoms, two tribes continuing still true to the house of *David*, and the other ten revolting, and setting up an opposite kingdom under *Jeroboam*. The chief of the two tribes was *Judah*, and the chief of the ten *Ephraim*; and so each kingdom was denominated from its chief tribe. The kingdom of the ten tribes, or of *Ephraim*, was soon after this prophecy destroy'd, as was foretold by *Isaiah*, chap. vii. 8. *Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people*: And since we never read that it was to be restored to its former state, as a distinct kingdom, but are assured of the contrary, (*Ezek. xxxvii. 22.*) I can hardly think the text is to be understood to speak merely of *Ephraim* and *Judah*; but the prophet designing to foretell the ceasing of all animosities in the kingdom of the *Messiah*, at that blessed time when it should be gloriously advanced in the world, seems to me to borrow names of parties and factions from his own times, and from the known division which was then among the *Israelites*, *q. d.* "You see  
" how mischievous the division of *Israel* has  
" prov'd, and how much prejudice each side  
" has done the other: But in the happy times  
" I speak of, nothing of this nature shall be  
" found; the subjects of the *Messiah* shall be  
" more thoroughly united; and tho' *Ephraim*  
" and *Judah* will be all subjects of the same  
" king, yet there shall then be no such enmity  
" as there now is, all such distinctions and all  
" factions



“factions shall then intirely cease.” ’Tis not Sermon  
unusual in the scripture to use names in such VII.  
a feigned rather than a strict and proper sense.   
Thus *Egypt*, *Sodom*, and *Babylon*, don't always  
signify the places that were commonly known  
by those names; but are mystically applied to  
denote such as in some respect or other resem-  
bled them. And thus in a more like case, the  
apostle thinking it, in all likelihood, invidious to  
name the several heads of parties among the  
*Corinthians*, chooses rather to put others in their  
room, and speaks of them as though they had  
been divided about himself, *Apollos*, and *Gephas*; *1 Cor. i. 12. iv. 6.* And such a figurative way  
of speaking of things remote and distant from  
the prophet's days, under names and terms very  
familiar in his own, was the more likely to an-  
swer his design, and to move and affect those to  
whom he prophesy'd.

In speaking to the words, I shall,

- I. Take a brief view of the state of these two  
people here mentioned.
  - II. Consider in what way the animosity was  
kept up between them, and is commonly  
between other parties; viz. by envy on the  
one hand, and vexing on the other.
  - III. Shew that the advancement of the in-  
terest and kingdom of Christ in the world,  
will be accompanied with the ceasing of such  
animosities.
- I. I shall take a brief view of the state of  
these people here mentioned, and of the case and  
condition they were in, and that only so far as  
may be thought to render them fit to be made  
the emblems of divisions and parties in after-  
times,

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Sermon times. Now there was a considerable difference  
 VII. between them in their ecclesiastical and civil capacity ; and in both *Judah* had a great advantage over *Ephraim*.

1. If we consider them as to their church-state, the true worship was fix'd in *Judah*, and *Ephraim* was destitute of it. When God brought the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, he designed that they should continue as one united church, or congregation ; and in order to it, he appointed only one place to which he required all to repair for his more solemn worship, making it unlawful to be perform'd any where else. Where the ark was, thither they were to bring all their sacrifices, and thither were all the males to repair three times a year to keep their solemn feasts. God chose the land of *Judah* as the place where it should at last be fix'd. It had indeed been a long time at *Shilo*, which belong'd to *Ephraim* ; but in the days of *Samuel* it was remov'd, and remain'd twenty years at *Kirjath-jearim*, which belong'd to the tribe of *Judah* ; and by *David* it was remov'd to *Jerusalem*, where it continu'd till *Solomon's* time, who fix'd it in the temple which he built. So that *Judah* had the prerogative in this respect. In *Judah* was God known ; in *Salem* was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in *Zion*, *Psal.* lxxvi. 1, 2. There in *Judah* the worship of God continued in *Isaiah's* time ; but *Ephraim* sadly degenerated upon their revolt from the house of *David*. As they set up another kingdom for themselves, their kings thought it policy to restrain them from going up to *Jerusalem* to worship, and therefore devised other places for them to worship in ; where, tho' they design'd their worship to the true God, yet it was not such as he had prescrib'd. And tho' there

were



were considerable corruptions in *Judah*, yet in *Sermon*  
the main they continued faithful; and there VII.  
was no comparison between *Ephraim* and them  
in that respect, as God testifies by another pro-  
phet cotemporary with *Isaiab*.: *Ephraim com-*  
*passeth me about with lyes, and the house of Israel*  
*with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is*  
*faithful with the saints,* *Hos. xi. 12.* And 'tis  
remarkable, that tho' we read of several of the  
kings of *Judah* who did that which was right in  
the sight of the Lord, we meet not with so much  
as one of the kings of *Israel* who deserv'd that  
character.

2. If we consider them in their civil state,  
there was a great difference between them; and  
therein also *Judah* had an advantage over *Ephraim*.  
As the promises under the old dispensation were  
very much of a temporal nature, the people of God  
were commonly either prosperous or afflicted in  
their outward concerns, according as they did or  
did not yield obedience to the laws of God. And  
*Ephraim* having now for a long time grievously  
corrupted the worship of God, had brought down  
his heavy judgments upon themselves, and were  
in a very broken and shatter'd condition. We  
meet with many passages that thus describe their  
case about this time in the prophecies of *Isaiab*  
and *Hosea*. *Ephraim* (says *Hosea*) is oppressed,  
and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked  
after the commandment, that is, the command-  
ment of the kings of *Israel*, who made the peo-  
ple to sin by worshiping at *Dan* and *Beitbel*;  
*Hos. v. 11.* Their state was now very declining  
and languishing. *Strangers* (as the same prophet  
says, ch. vii. 9.) had devour'd his strength, and he  
knew it not: yea, grey hairs were here and there  
upon him, and he knew it not; that is, there were  
many

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Sermon many plain signs of the decrepid state and approaching dissolution of their kingdom, tho' they were insensible of it. And *Isaiab* expressly fixes the time hereof, that it should be *within three-score and five years*. 'Tis true, there was much corruption in *Judah* at the same time, and God had been punishing them for their sins, and their state was considerably weaken'd ; but it was not to the same degree with that of *Ephraim* or *Israel*, nor was that kingdom so near to its dissolution ; and indeed it lasted above one hundred years after *Israel* was carried into captivity. This brief account of the different cases of those two people, may help us the more easily to apprehend the animosities that were between them, and so to discern the reason why God made use of their names in describing the mischief of parties in general. I therefore proceed now to the second thing I propos'd ;

II. In what way the animosity was kept up between *Ephraim* and *Judah*, and is commonly between other parties who may be compar'd with them. The prophet sets it out by *envy* on the one hand, and *vexing* on the other. Either of these may happen to be foremost, and give occasion or provocation to the other : but when we consider the corruption of men, and how prone they are in affliction to envy, and in prosperity to pride and imperiousness, we may, without much difficulty, suppose them to be many times of the same date, and as serving continually to whet and increase each other. And since it may in that respect appear indifferent which is treated of first, there can be no hurt in following the order in which the prophet has set them. And,



1. In such parties and divisions the inferior side are prone to *envy* the superior. Thus it was in *Isaiab's* days: *Ephraim* was the weaker side, and is accordingly represented as *envying Judah*. There is need of a great degree of virtue, and of that charity, one of whose properties 'tis that it *envieth not*, to make us easy and contented in meaner circumstances than those about us. Men have naturally a conceit of their own merit, and are apt to imagine that they have as much right to prosperity as their neighbours: And not only does the want of it make them discontented and uneasy, but it raises ill-will against those who enjoy it. They narrowly pry into their characters, and greedily lay hold of any thing which they think will lessen their reputation, and expose them to the like malignity and hatred with that which they have themselves conceiv'd against them. They look back upon former times, wherein it may be they had the advantage, and the other side was inferior to them; and 'tis great odds if they can neither truly discover, nor wickedly contrive, somewhat dishonourable and base to charge their neighbours with; and to which they would have all the advantage they have now over them to be attributed. Thus it might be, that *Ephraim*, understood literally, might envy *Judah* partly upon a political, and partly upon a religious account. They might be apt to attribute the broken state of their kingdom to the wars which had been between them and *Judah*, and to aggravate the unkindness of those who were of the same stock, and formerly made but one kingdom with them. They might perhaps too repine at *Judah's* religious advantages, that they should have the ark of the testimony among them; and their

Sermon VII.

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Sermon displeasure might be heightned by remembering  
 VII. the accounts of former times, wherein it abode  
 in their territories. And as at their revolt, and  
 the setting up of their separate kingdom, they  
 seem to speak of *David* and his house with hatred  
 and contempt, 1 Kings xii. 16. *What portion have*  
*we in David? neither have we inheritance in the*  
*son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel; now see*  
*to thine own house, David:* So 'tis possible they  
 might ascribe this fixing of the ark to his craft,  
 and partiality to his own tribe.

It may perhaps be objected against this, that  
*Ephraim* or *Israel* do not seem to have been dis-  
 pleased with their own worship, or concern'd for  
 their want of the true service in the temple at *Je-*  
*rusalem*; and so there could be no room for this  
 kind of envy.

But it may be replied, that their compliance  
 with the worship appointed by *Jeroboam*, was  
 owing to constraint rather than choice: and the  
 controversy, whether *Jerusalem* was the proper  
 place of worship, rather than *Dan* and *Betbel*,  
 being so easy for every one to decide who look'd  
 into the law, it can hardly be supposed that they  
 were insensible of the advantage which *Judah* had  
 in this respect; and 'tis therefore highly probable,  
 they were inwardly moved with grief and envy  
 against *Judah*, because of their having the true  
 worship among them, while yet they had not  
 resolution or courage enough to disobey the com-  
 mandment of their kings in repairing to it at the  
 appointed times.

I wish we had less reason to judge thus con-  
 cerning parties then, from the observation we  
 may easily make of those of our own times.  
 There is, perhaps, hardly any one party among  
 us (I speak of Protestants) but has somewhat  
 peculiar



peculiar among them that deserves commendation; and were mankind less disposed to envy true merit, and more inclin'd to give it its due praise, and to imitate it; all parties might improve by one another, till all by such a noble imitation of what was good in each, should at length find themselves insensibly united into one body. But envy cankers the best things, turns virtue into vice, and fixes that as a blemish and reproach, which is the justest occasion of praise and commendation. Envy is commonly most remarkable in those of an inferior condition: but let the condition be what it will, an envious temper may make a man look upon it as inferior in some respect or other to his neighbours; and so it may reign in those who are in a superior condition too. And indeed it seems essential to a true party-spirit. And the mischief of it is unspeakable; not only by the uneasiness and torment it necessarily gives the mind where it reigns, but as it naturally prompts men to prejudice, and undermines those upon whom it fixes, in their reputation, or any advantages which they ever so justly possess. Nor need we wonder that it is so mischievous, when we consider what practices commonly accompany it; and therefore are by *St. Paul*, 2 Cor. xii. 20. join'd with it, viz. *Debates, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults*. And indeed, as another apostle tells us, *Jam. iii. 16. Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

2. In such parties and divisions the superior side are prone to vex the inferior. Thus in the text, as *Ephraim* is spoken of as being used to envy *Judah*, so is *Judah* represented as being accusom'd. to vex *Ephraim*: and *Judah*,

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Sermon as I observ'd before, was in several respects

VII. superior to *Ephraim*. 'Tis the same corrupt

 affection that is the root of both these evils. 'Tis pride that makes men discontented and envious in a low condition; as St. James says, chap. iv. 5, *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy*; and by the next verse it appears that he speaks of the pride of mens hearts. And 'tis the same evil disposition that discovers it self in those who are in prosperous circumstances; for 'tis pride that makes them imperious and cruel. 'Tis very hard for such degenerate creatures as we are to escape the dangerous snares of either estate, and particularly not to be puffed up when things succeed according to our desires. The *Psalmist* has fully describ'd the temper and behaviour of the wicked in this respect; *Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6, 7, 8. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily.*

There is hardly any thing men more eagerly covet than power: whence they are ready to improve every advantage which they have above others, to the enlarging of their authority and influence; and the more they find this contested, the more earnest they commonly are to exert and establish it, by making their adversaries feel the weight of it. 'Tis therefore natural to them to apply all their wit and power to vex such as would oppose them.

There is a great variety of the methods that are us'd to this purpose. Sometimes the superior party endeavour to over-power the inferior

by



by downright force and violence, and so to Sermon  
compel them to a submission to their will, or VII.  
at once to destroy them. This, no doubt, was the  
aim of *Judab* in their wars against *Ephraim* ;  
they sought to destroy that kingdom, and to  
recover the people to a subjection to the kings  
of *Judab*. And in a contest for power, whether  
it be between distinct kingdoms, or distinct  
parties in the same kingdom, little regard is  
commonly paid to justice and equity : Men set  
no bounds to the exercise of their power, but  
by their chief aim, the obtaining their will.  
How much slaughter and desolation has this often  
caused in the world !

And where men have it not in their power  
utterly to destroy an adverse party, yet they  
will not fail to do all they can to distress them.  
When they cannot wound their persons, they will  
their estates, and do them all the mischief they  
can in their several callings, by which they sup-  
port themselves and their families. This has  
been often done by cruel and oppressive laws,  
which a party-spirit will put men upon enacting,  
when they are vested with an authority to do it ;  
and 'tis frequently seen, that when they are not,  
they will stir up others to it, and are very ready  
to rejoice in it.

But when men are disappointed in this respect,  
their restless spirit will ingage them in other  
ways of vexing such as they are displeased with.  
Insulting language, opprobrious names, and vile  
slanders, are weapons which party-men are sel-  
dom at a loss for ; and especially when they  
fancy themselves to stand upon the higher ground.  
And when religion has an interest in the quarrel,  
instead of moderating mens passions, it frequent-  
ly on one, if not on both sides, heightens them,  
and

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Sermon and carries men to the utmost extravagance in  
**VII.** the use of such arts ; as though men thought religion were sufficient to sanctify not only injustice, but even barbarity. Such treatment must needs be very vexatious ; and the more innocent the sufferers are, the more heinously may they be suppos'd to resent it. Nor can it be thought strange that it should raise in men envy and hatred, and render them avow'd adversaries, as the text may be understood to speak of that as the effect of it. If by the adversaries of *Judab* in the former part of the verse we should understand *Ephraim*, as, considering the whole verse, may not be very unreasonable, then the latter part of the verse accounts for the way they were made adversaries, even by *Judab's* vexing them. Such is the animosity frequently between parties, and so does the true spirit of them work by oppression and cruelty on the one hand, and by envy on the other ; and these instigate and provoke one another, so that there must of necessity be the utmost distraction and confusion where such a spirit reigns. I proceed to the third thing I propos'd.

**III.** That the advancement of the interest and kingdom of Christ in the world, will be accompanied with the ceasing of party-strife and animosity. This I gather from the occasion and connection of the words. The subject-matter of the prophecy is the spreading of the *Messiah's* kingdom ; and 'tis concerning that time that 'tis here foretold, that *Ephraim* shall not then envy *Judab*, nor *Judab* vex *Ephraim*, that is, that such party-strifes and animosities shall then cease. And I shall now offer some considerations which may serve to shew how much this tends to the advancement and prosperity of Christ's kingdom.

And,

I

I. I



I. I may here argue from our Saviour's general maxim, concerning the mischief of the contrary, *Every kingdom divided against it self, is brought to desolation*, Matt. xii. 25. And indeed when fellow-subjects are fighting against, and destroying one another, what can the consequence be but the weakening, if not the utter overthrow of the state? A foreign war is not in its own nature near so pernicious, as a civil. Every advantage gained by either side in a civil war, is a prejudice to the whole body; nor can any victory obtain'd be just matter of hearty joy and triumph, because what one party gains, the community loses. Besides, that in such a case all things are in the utmost confusion, and a stop is put to the subjects following those arts and employments whereby they used to serve the publick. In like manner the internal animosities and divisions of the kingdom of Christ, can't but be very mischievous and threatening to it. And however the watchful care of our Redeemer will secure the fulfilment of his promise concerning the continuance of his church in general; yet 'tis manifest that his interest in this or that particular place may be quite lost. And when the professed subjects of Christ's kingdom are engaged in feuds and animosities, and seeking to hurt and prejudice each other, how can his interest in such a place advance? St. Paul warns the *Galatians* of the sad consequence of these things: *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*, Gal. iii. 15. Christianity must needs suffer by such furious zeal; for besides its contrariety to the christian rule (which I shall have occasion to mention afterwards) men are hereby diverted from the main business of religion; and the zeal that

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Sermon that would be very commendably laid out in  
 .VII. following after holiness, is unprofitably wasted  
 upon the peculiarities of a party. Nor does  
 such party-zeal much answer the end for which  
 men perhaps use it. 'Tis not much adapted to  
 convince such as happen to be mistaken. The  
 proper method to convince is by *instructing with  
 meekness those that oppose themselves*, 2 Tim. ii. 25.  
*but the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness  
 of God*, Jam. i. 20. However men may applaud  
 themselves for their *having bitter zeal and strife  
 in their hearts*, and may glory in this as true wis-  
 dom or religion; yet they do but *lye against the  
 truth*: for *this wisdom descendeth not from above,  
 but is earthly, sensual, devilish*, Jam. iii. 14, 15.  
 Nor can it be thought that these animosities  
 among christians should be any other than an hin-  
 drance to the spreading of their religion among  
 such as are strangers to it: for when they see  
 the professors of it so bitterly raging one against  
 another, they will have but little encouragement  
 to espouse a religion which they apprehend will  
 presently draw them to be parties in the disa-  
 greeable and unseemly quarrel. Little service  
 therefore can be expected to be done for the  
 religion of the blessed Jesus, while the pretend-  
 ed friends of it are eagerly and bitterly contend-  
 ing with one another.

2. The ceasing of party-strifes and animosi-  
 ties must contribute very much to the advance-  
 ment of the christian religion, because men are  
 then best disposed to search after and discover  
 the truth, and to understand the grounds and  
 reasons of that religion which they embrace. If  
 christianity were what some men seem to ima-  
 gine, a meer name and profession; if a bare  
*form of godliness* would to all intents and purposes



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constitute men the subjects of our Saviour ; his Sermon  
kingdom would suffer less damage by these con- VII.  
tentions : for tho' they might prejudice strangers  
more against it, yet it might be continued well  
enough where it was fix'd, while all parties  
agreed to train up their children, at least in  
the profession of christianity ; or if the *kingdom*  
*of God came with observation*, and were promoted  
by a worldly pomp and splendor, the emulation  
between parties might contribute to the ad-  
vancement of it : but when 'tis remember'd that  
the life and *power of godliness* is absolutely ne-  
cessary to be join'd with the *form* of it, and that  
the religion which men profess must influence  
and govern the heart and life ; it can't be  
thought, that a careless and slothful taking  
doctrines upon trust from parents, tutors, or mi-  
nisters, or merely in conformity to the fashion  
of the country where we live, can be sufficient.  
If such motives could justify mens embracing  
christianity, why might they not as well justify  
them in receiving any other religion ? If it be  
said christianity is the true religion ; 'tis easy to  
answer, that that is more than such men know,  
till they have examin'd the nature and evidence  
of it : Nor is there any virtue in their being in  
the right, since it proceeds not from any love  
they have to truth, or pains they have taken to  
inform themselves concerning it ; but as to them  
'tis a mere matter of chance, there being no  
religion which might not have come recom-  
mended to them by all the same motives upon  
which they profess christianity. If we would  
pay to God a reasonable service, as our religi-  
on teaches us, certainly we had need look into  
it and understand it. And since *the grace of God*  
which appears in the gospel, is design'd to cure  
our

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Sermon our disorderly affections, and to mend our lives,  
**VII.** *teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and  
 to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present  
 world,* Tit. ii. 12. it can't be supposed to have a  
 sufficient influence upon us for such purposes, un-  
 less the deepest conviction of its truth be fix'd in  
 the mind. Then therefore is the kingdom of  
 Christ most truly advanced, not when the pro-  
 fessors of christianity become more numerous,  
 but when their profession is owing to a deep sense  
 of the truth and excellency of it, acquir'd by a  
 careful and impartial examination. When men  
*bear the word of the kingdom and understand it not,*  
*the devil easily catcheth it away,* Mat. xlii. 19.

Now the ceasing of party-strifes will very  
 much contribute to such an examination, and to  
 the discovery of truth, and so to the advance-  
 ment of christianity. Where men are govern'd  
 by zeal for a party, the fond prejudices they  
 have conceived, dispose them to seek and to  
 perceive the truth. Their aim is to find out  
 what they can that will serve the opinion they  
 have resolved to maintain: And while without  
 examination they take the maxims of their party  
 for truth, they try all other opinions by that un-  
 certain standard. And 'tis a very hard matter  
 for a man who lives in the midst of such con-  
 tending parties, to keep his mind untainted by  
 them. But where these cease, every man is  
 more at leisure to search after truth, and there  
 is less to divert him from the search, and to pre-  
 vent his making a discovery.

Besides, the ceasing of such animosities leaves  
 men more masters of themselves, in a sedate and  
 quiet temper of mind, by virtue of which they  
 are better disposed to hearken to reason, and to  
 form a true judgment of things. Anger and  
 wrath



wrath ruffle the mind, obscure the judgment, *Sermon*  
and make men deaf to the strongest argument: VII.

Whence we commonly judge it most prudent  
not to admonish or reason with a person in the  
height of his passion; but to let him cool, and,  
as we very aptly express it, *come to himself* first.  
And indeed as men hardly seem to be themselves  
while they are in their sudden and transient passi-  
ons, so some men are through the influence of a  
party in such a continual transport of fury and  
rage, that they can hardly ever be said to be  
themselves: And though they may behave in  
other matters with prudence and discretion, yet  
let but any thing relating to their party be start-  
ed, and their disorder, like the distraction of  
some persons about a particular subject, does  
presently discover it self. So that in this respect  
the removing animosities is most serviceable to  
advance the kingdom of the Messiah, as it leaves  
men to a calm and sedate temper, which is of  
all others the most fitted to discover the truth,  
and especially the *truth as 'tis in Jesus*.

3. The nature of our Saviour's kingdom shows  
how necessarily the advancement of it must be  
accompanied with peace, and a cessation of ani-  
mosities among his subjects. St. Paul has given  
us an account of the kingdom of God, which is  
clear to this purpose. *The kingdom of God* (which  
is the same with the kingdom of Christ, it being  
that kingdom which God administers by him) is  
not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and  
joy in the Holy Ghost; Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 19. that  
the distinguishing characters of the subjects  
of this kingdom, are not meat and drink, a liber-  
ty for using a greater variety of meats and drinks  
than the Jews had, which is an inconsiderable  
thing in comparison of those essential things,  
*righte-*

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Sermon *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

VII. And that these are the main, he shows in the next words; *For he that in these things serveth Christ, as a true subject of his kingdom, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* Whereupon he adds: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

Now if peace be so essential to the kingdom of Christ, how can we suppose that the one should advance without the other? When our Saviour came into the world, the angels proclaim'd *peace on earth*, Luke ii. 14. in his ministry he inculcated peace upon his disciples; *Have salt*, says he, *in your selves, and have peace one with another*, Mark ix. 50. when he was leaving the world he bequeathed them peace as his legacy, (*John xiv. 27.*) and in his death he design'd the making peace between *Jew and Gentile*, and to reconcile both in one body, (*Eph. ii. 14, 15.*) Now since he had this so much in view, he can't be supposed to reckon his interest promoted, while the contrary to it prevails: But the prosperity and increase of his government must be attended with the increase of peace, and the decay and abolition of party strifes and contentions, according to the account of this prophecy; and especially since peace and love are so strictly injoin'd, and hatred and variance are so expressly forbidden by him in the laws he has enacted for the government of his subjects.

4. Since the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, whenever it is, must be owing to an effusion of the divine spirit, we may from his operations and fruits argue how necessarily peace and love must accompany it. The great advantages of the church are brought about *not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit*, saith the Lord of

*hosts.*

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*hosts*, Zec. iv. 6. When religion is in the most languishing condition, God is able to revive the power of it, by the gift of his Holy Spirit, whose fruits and effects all virtuous and holy dispositions are reckon'd to be. And when God gives his Holy Spirit for such a purpose, can we think that the animosities of christians one against another can continue? The unity of christians is attributed to him, and we are required to *hold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*; Eph. iv. 3. Animosities must cease where the fruits of the Spirit abound (as they must when Christ's kingdom is advanc'd) *For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, &c.* Gal. v. 22. How contrary to party-strifes is that love or charity which is the fruit of the Spirit, and of which we have that agreeable account left us? *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,* 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. This blessed fruit of the spirit must necessarily prevail together with the interest of Christ in the world; and most destructive it is to *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, sects, envyings*, which are the *works of the flesh*; Gal. v. 20. wherein the spirit of a party does discover it self. Upon the whole, it cannot seem strange, that the time of the more eminent advancement of our Saviour's kingdom, should be describ'd in the prophecy as a time of great peace and unanimity, wherein the animosities of parties should cease.

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Sermon  
VII.

And thus having spoken to the things I propos'd, I shall conclude with the three following reflections on what has been said.

(1.) We may hence learn to bewail the unhappiness of our own country and time, and may perceive what is one great hindrance of the advancement of religion among us. If we compare our present temper with that which the prophet foretels should take place when the kingdom of the Messiah should be enlarg'd, we shall find but little resemblance. And I verily believe, that among the several things that obstruct the progress and success of the gospel, I mean that true piety 'tis design'd to promote, our divisions, as manag'd with so much fiery zeal, are not the least. I avoid entring upon particulars, that I may keep clear of the evil I am censuring. It cannot be a service to peace, to lay all the load upon one party, when, perhaps, none of the rest are wholly innocent in the quarrel: If they were in the first rise, yet 'tis very unlikely they have been so through the whole management of it. But I speak of the evil in general, and the mischief which is done by it. And doubtless there are very many good men in the several parties into which we are unhappily divided, who have religion so much at heart, and are so well qualified for the spreading of it, that we might expect far greater success of their indeavours than we see, were neither their own nor their hearers minds in too great a degree diverted by a party-zeal. But that which perhaps may seem the most threatening part of our calamity, is that there are too many who are for aggravating the differences among christians to the utmost, and with all their skill and industry cherish divisions,  
and



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and inflame the fiery zeal which they should in-  
deavour to quench. Sermon VII.

(2.) If party-strifes are so prejudicial to the interest of religion, then all who wish well to it should be ready to part with such things as they allow are not absolutely necessary, or of any great use, when they find by experience they are improv'd to the encouragement and promotion of such strifes. Men may not part with things absolutely necessary, nor, which is the same thing to them, with what they think to be so; nor are they to omit what they think God has made a duty, because others think it no duty at all: But where no such necessity of a thing is apprehended, nor any extraordinary usefulness of it can be alleg'd, it seems to me to be prudent and christian for any party to quit it, rather than to continue an occasion of wrangling for the sake of it. Nay, if, as it sometimes happens, the same thing is judg'd necessary by some, which is reckon'd barely advisable, or perhaps only tolerable, by others, one would think that by a little yielding on each hand, men might easily prevent a rupture, and the splitting into parties: And both of them thereby do service to religion in general; the one, for instance, bearing for peace sake with what they judge tolerable; and the other, for the same reason, contenting themselves with their bearing with it, without insisting upon their agreeing with their opinion of the necessity of it. I studiously wave the exemplifying this, as I easily might, in particular cases: The mentioning it in general can do no harm; and if all parties would honestly practise it, I am sure it must be of singular service to the church of God.

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But there are other things wherein no such necessity or usefulness can be pretended, and which perhaps by some are judg'd evil, or however doubtful; and certainly, for the avoiding strife, men in this case should be willing either to forbear the use of such things, or, however, to be easy in their own use of them, without expecting the compliance of those who are otherwise minded.

Again, sometimes it may happen that a thing which might not be designed amiss at first, shall answer no purpose so much as that of incouraging animosities, and firing the zeal of one party against another: And then doubtless the cutting off the occasion which is taken could do no damage, but must rather be a service to the cause of religion. And if I should venture to allege the observation of this day as an instance of this nature, I flatter my self that I shall not be understood as censuring a party, but only some particular persons who take this handle to stir mens passions, and to vex and provoke their neighbours.

However just we suppose the reason was at first for appointing the day to be observ'd, and with how much piety and devotion it may have been observ'd by very good men; yet as it relates to a fact so long ago transacted, wherein none of the present generation could have the least hand, and the righteous God disdains mens using that proverb, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the childrens teeth are set an edge*, Ezek. xviii. 2. &c. we can't reasonably think God will be offended, should the observation of the day be laid aside. It would be injurious to a merciful God, to suppose that he *keeps his anger for ever*; or that he who shew'd a regard to a wicked *Abab's* hum-



humbling himself, (1 Kings xxi. 29.) has not ac-  
 cepted of the humiliation that has been annually  
 observ'd for so many years past. Nor is it like-  
 ly, that he, who would have *all our things be done*  
*with charity*, 1 Cor. xvi. 14. and is displeased  
 when his people form themselves into parties, en-  
 vying and vexing one another; 'tis not, I say,  
 likely, that he will disapprove the removal of such  
 occasions of wrath and bitterness. But however  
 the friends of peace may wish well to such a  
 course; yet it must be left to the wisdom of the  
 legislature, who are able to judge whether the  
 present government is not sensibly touched by  
 the use which is by some made of the day; and  
 whether they are not the enemies, or at least the  
 very doubtful friends of our happy settlement,  
 who are most fond of the day, and loudest in  
 their invectives upon it.

(3.) Since party-strifes and animosities are hin-  
 drances to the advancement of our Saviour's king-  
 dom, let us all beware that we do not contribute  
 to the promoting them. When parties abound, as  
 we all see they do in the present age, 'tis difficult  
 for persons to keep themselves from being im-  
 bark'd with some or other of them, and from be-  
 ing carry'd away with the spirit of that party to  
 which they have join'd themselves; but the more  
 difficult the thing is, the more need have we to  
 watch with relation to it. I don't think that in  
 order to this a person is to be indifferent about  
 the several opinions that are abroad in the world:  
 Nay, if I am not mistaken, such an indifference  
 is one of the prevailing evils of the present age.  
 'Tis certainly christians duty to *prove all things*,  
 in order to their *holding fast that which is good*;  
 1 Theff. v. 21. and the less they take things upon

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Sermon trust, the more likely they are to discover and  
 VII. to be establish'd in the truth. Nor do I think it  
 lawful for men to disown what they apprehend to  
 be a truth, for the sake of avoiding strife; tho'  
 prudence may direct them not to publish it, when  
 neither the importance of it, nor the likelihood  
 of doing more good by spreading the truth, than  
 hurt by causing strife, appears to be very great.  
 Nor is it necessary that all christians should en-  
 tertain exactly the same sentiments in order to  
 their avoiding such animosities. 'Tis hardly to  
 be expected that all good men will ever in this  
 world be exactly of the same judgment in all  
 things. All therefore that can be done by chris-  
 tians is to prevent the ill consequences of such un-  
 avoidable differences, and to take care that they  
 be not transported by an intemperate zeal against  
 those who differ from them, but that they bear  
 with one another in love. Every man has a  
 right indeed to vindicate, as he is able, what he  
 judges to be truth; But still he must answer for  
 it, if he does not do it according to the rules of  
 charity and meekness. 'Tis certain that the  
 things absolutely necessary to be believ'd are not  
 only few, but very plain, and expressly deliver'd  
 in the scripture; And the professed belief of these,  
 as they are contain'd therein, without the com-  
 ments of this or the other party, should be a  
 sufficient ground for christians to receive and  
 love one another, provided their lives are agree-  
 able to the christian rule. The design of our  
 holy religion is not to fill mens heads with insig-  
 nificant and nice speculations; but to make them  
 good men, to form them to the likeness of God,  
 and a meetness for the injoyment of him. And  
 where men live *soberly, righteously, and godly*, 'tis



a sign they have learnt the lesson the grace of **Sermon VII.**  
God was design'd to teach them, and that they know and believe all that is absolutely necessary for a christian: And till we see men part with a *good conscience*, we should beware how we censure them as *making shipwreck of faith*, 1 Tim. i. 19. because they think differently from us. Modesty should teach us to think that we may be mistaken as well as our neighbours, and therefore should not rashly judge them.

There is nothing will tend more to the putting an end to party-strifes, than if men will agree on all hands not to make their own opinions a standard for other mens, and will resolve to insist upon no more from one another than a plain scripture belief; and if they will sincerely love all good men without any regard to parties. Men are ready to magnify themselves as *spiritual* for their being of a party; but St. Paul makes this an argument of the contrary: *Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?* 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. If mens love is guided by a party, it is but *carnal*; they love only their own likeness, and they *walk as men*, it being common for men to love such as are like themselves: But then is our love truly noble, when goodness it self is the object of it; for then, as this is God's image, 'tis apparent we love men for God's sake. Till we see more of this love and charity reviv'd, religion is like to languish, and the labours of ministers to be but of little service. And therefore for God's sake let every one lend a helping hand in the case; let every one watch and endeavour to

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Sermon mend his own spirit, and be an example of that  
VII. christian temper which is so desirable for the  
prosperity of the nation, and of religion among  
us. And with all his other indeavours, let every  
one join his fervent prayers, that the Lord of  
peace would give us peace always, by all means,  
2 Theff. iii. 16. *Amen.*

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The

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*The Reasonableness of serving God  
with our best.*

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A

## S E R M O N

Preach'd to YOUNG PEOPLE ON

## G E N E S I S I V. 4.

*And Abel, he also brought of the first-  
lings of his flock, and of the fat  
thereof. And the Lord had respect  
to Abel, and to his offering.*

**W**HEN the apostle sets before the Sermon  
Hebrews a cloud of famous wit- VIII.  
nesses, and enumerates the ancient  
illustrious patterns of faith and  
virtue, he takes his rise from the person spoken  
of in the text, Heb. xi, 4. *By faith Abel, &c.*  
And no doubt he was a very singular as well  
as early and ancient pattern of religion in the  
world. But it may be thought that there is  
nothing here spoken concerning him, that will  
particularly suit the intention and design of this  
discourse. I might answer to that, that *it is not*  
*utterly improbable* that the very person who is  
here spoken of, was himself a young man, and  
espe-

Sermon especially if we consider his years in a propor-

VIII. tion to what was then the ordinary standard and measure of human life. When the age of man extended to about 960 years, a man at 130 year old had spent but the same part of the ordinary time of life, that we have, now our lives are so much shortened, at 12 or 13. And therefore, speaking according to that proportion, we have here undoubtedly the example of a young person; for his brother *Seth*, that was born after his death, was born when his father was but 130 years old; and considering that we know not in what year of his father *Abel* was born, but only that he was not his eldest son, and that we know not what distance of time might be between his death and the birth of *Seth*, it will be a supposable case, that at the time of his death he was much younger than what we have hitherto accounted for; and especially since we read nothing of any off-spring of his, which yet, undoubtedly, in that early time of the unpeopled world, they were not indifferent about.

But let that be as it will, in his offering, and the acceptance of it, both which are recorded here in the text, we have a very instructive and encouraging example, that may well be applied to this particular occasion. And to this purpose may those words of the apostle be consider'd, *Heb. xi. 4. And by it he being dead, yet speaketh.* And how is it then that he speaks to us? or what is there in his example that calls for our imitation? It is not that we should, as he did, offer living things in sacrifice to God: This is what God does not now require, and what he would not be pleas'd with. It is not such a kind of service, it is only a rational service which he now calls for at our hands. But herein *Abel*



is an example to us, and being dead, yet speak-  
eth to us ; that when he served God, he did it  
with the best that he had. And this is the ge-  
neral meaning of that account that is given of  
his offering : *He brought of the firstlings of his  
flock, and of the fat thereof ;* that is, he pick'd  
out the choicest and the best of them to offer to  
God.

Sermon  
VIII.

Hence then I raise these observations.

I. That God is to be served by us with the  
best we have.

II. That where persons do so serve him, he  
will have a respect to, and be pleas'd with  
them and their service. *And the Lord had  
a respect to Abel and his offering.*

I. That God is to be served by us with the  
best that we have. And in speaking to this I  
shall,

1. Shew the reasonableness of the thing in  
general.

2. Consider what this extends to, or what that  
best is we are to serve him with.

1. As to the reasonableness of the thing in  
general ; such considerations as these will serve  
to evince and clear it.

1. God's own transcendent greatness and ex-  
cellency does evidence that he is thus to be served  
by us. This consideration, which proves him  
the worthy object of our adoration and service,  
proves him too most worthy of the best service  
that we are capable of performing.

'Tis the infinite perfection of God that renders  
and proves him to be adorable ; for because he  
is in himself the best of all beings, therefore he  
is worthy of our highest esteem and affection,  
and

Sermon and our most lowly submission to him; and we

VIII. injure the perfections of his nature whenever we pay that respect to any thing else. And this his greatness and excellency will evidence, that as we are to serve him, we are to serve him with our very best: If we would serve or please a child, we may offer him trifles or baubles, or any such things, as we should be ashamed to offer to a wise man, or to any mighty prince or monarch, who would resent the very offer of such things as an heinous offence and indignity.

God is (as he himself speaks concerning this very matter) *a great King*, and consequently trifling services are not suitable to be offered to him\*. If we were to serve senseless and dumb idols, 'twere no great matter in what manner we serv'd them; but when we have to do with the living God, that searches the heart and tries the reins, a God to whom nothing is hid, who is infinite in wisdom and power, we are to look well to our selves, that we do it in the best way we possibly can.

And this is given as the reason why all creatures should praise God. So when the *Psalmist* calls upon them all to do so, *let them*, says he, *praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven.*

2. As our best services are most suitable to him as the most excellent of beings, so upon the very same account we may be sensible that it is of the greatest importance to us that we should please him, and consequently that we should serve him with our best, since that is the most likely way to do so. It must be a dangerous thing to offend such a being as God is, to whom all

\* Cum constet apud omnes personæ sublimi maxima offerri debere munera. Hil. Diac. Quæst. in N. & V. T. 95. p. 428.



## *Serving GOD with our best.*

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all perfections do belong ; and who therefore is most able to avenge all the affronts and injuries which any of his creatures offer to him. He sets himself out to us as a jealous God, and a consuming fire ; and the greatness of his power, and the dreadfulnes of his vengeance should make us afraid. You see how he resents the indignity that is offered to him by men who serve him not with their very best, *Mal.* i. 8, 10, 13, 14. And on the contrary, nothing can be more advantageous to us than his being pleas'd with us, as the greatness of his power, whereby he is able to bestow upon us the most glorious rewards, is sufficient to evince. And if we would be studious to please him, our own consciences must tell us that this is of all other the most likely way. But that will farther be consider'd under the other general head.

3. It is but reasonable that we should serve him with our best, because he is our Creator ; and we are all of us absolutely his.

As he has made us, he must have a right to us as his own ; and we are necessarily bound to yield our selves to him and his service. And so great is the benefit of creation, which is the foundation of all other, as without that we should not be capable of any other, that we can never render a service and homage to him answerable to the greatness of it. There is none to whom we can be so much indebted as we are to him, to whom we owe our very being, and therefore our best services are to be consecrated to him ; for to whom else should we yield them ? Or how can we yield them to any other than him without doing him the most manifest injury and wrong ? For what is this but an owning our obligations to be greater to some other than to God ?

4. When

Sermon

VIII.

4. When we serve God with our best, we serve him with nothing but what is his own; and certainly it is but just, that whatever is his should be employ'd in his service, and to his glory. Who can answer that question of the apostle, *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* any otherwise than freely owning, as the apostle supposes every man must do, that he has nothing of any such nature. Whatever we have as to our indowments, as to our enjoyments, as to our time, &c. we have all from God: He is the giver of every good and perfect gift; and as our best does proceed from his bounty, so it is but reasonable that it should be devoted to his service; and when it is so, we then give him nothing but his own, and certainly that is but a just and reasonable service. See how *David* speaks when he and the people had offered willingly and largely toward the building of the temple for the service of God. *All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* And so in like manner may we say of whatever service we perform. And we may consider too, that of whatever we possess, we are not properly lords and proprietors, but only stewards. As all these things proceed from God, so we have them not to use according to our own wills and humours; but we are intrusted with the use and care of these as so many talents for our great Master, to whom we must at last give an account of our stewardship, how we have disposed of his goods. And since all that he intrusts us with, is ultimately referred by him to his own glory, it is but just and equal that we should accordingly use the best that we have in his service.

1 Chron.  
xxix. 14.

5. We



5. We may add to the consideration of his being our Creator, that of his being our Redeemer, which does farther abundantly evidence the reasonableness of our serving him with the best that we have. It is with a miracle of love and grace that God has brought about our restoration and salvation, when we had ruin'd and destroy'd our selves; and had by our folly rendered our very being unprofitable, nay, prejudicial and hurtful to us. This lays us under the strongest obligations to God. Sin had brought us into such a case, that it had been good for us that we had never been born, as it had exposed us to an eternity of woe and misery; but God has found out a ransom for us, and has not spared his own Son, but has deliver'd him up for us all. That he should be so kind to us, who had so heinously provoked him, that he should express his kindness in such a manner, by giving his own Son, the Son of his love, to be a sacrifice, that so he might be a Saviour; what greater evidence could he give of his love? How unreasonable is it then that we should think any thing too great or too good to be devoted to his service! He has (as I may say) serv'd us with his best; for what has he better or more dear to him than his own Son? and what comparison can the utmost we are able to offer bear with him?

'Tis plain then by these proofs, that God is most worthy to be served by us with the best that we have. And to these, various other proofs might be added; but I shall now pass them over. The next thing therefore to be consider'd is;

2. What this extends to, or what is that best that we are to serve him with.

Now

Sermon

VIII.



Now in answer to this, I might say in general, that it extends to the best that we have, of whatever nature and kind, that we can imploy in his service. When God required of old the offering of slain beasts in sacrifice to him, a person was not to save the best for his own use, and offer the refuse of his flocks or herds to God: He was not to offer the torn, the feeble, or maimed; nay, he was cursed that offered the lame or the blind, or any such like in sacrifice to God. It was a man's duty then to do as *Abel* did in the text, to choose the very best, to bring of *the firstlings of the flock, and the fat thereof.*

And thus are we to think with our selves, that whatever we are to serve God with (and indeed we have nothing but what is one way or other for that end) we should serve him with the best of it. Consider it as to our persons; these we are required to yield to God and his service, and herein we are to serve God with our best, with our best and most noble and excellent powers; we are not to think that he is to be put off with an outward shew, and with bodily service; we have received noble spirits from God, whereby we are capable of rendering him a more excellent and noble service; and therefore the labour of the lip, the honour of the tongue, and the devotion of the knee alone will not do: *God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* And to worship God with the body only without the spirit, is as unsuitable as it would have been of old to have offered a dead carcass instead of a living creature in sacrifice. Our choicest and our best affections are to attend and to inoble our service; while we with-hold these, we do not give to him the best service for kind that we are capable of. So we  
are

John iv.

24.



are required to honour God with our substance, Sermon  
and we are to endeavour to do so; there is no- VIII.  
thing we possess of this world's goods, which we  
are not to use for his glory, and which we are  
not to be ready and willing to part with for the  
honour of God, whenever he is pleas'd to call  
for it. The like I may say of our families, of  
our interest, of our strength, of our studies, &c.  
These are all to be used for God; and we are  
not to think any thing we have of these, or any  
such blessings, is to be alienated from his service,  
or that we are not to consecrate the best of them  
thereto.

But since I cannot enlarge upon these, there is  
one instance which suits my present design which  
I shall insist upon, and shall only take notice of  
any others as they will serve to strengthen and  
confirm this, and that is, that God is to be served  
with the very *best* and choicest of our *time*.

And this brings the matter home upon those  
that are *young*. The considerations I have alleg'd  
already may satisfy you, that it is but reason-  
able that you should every one of you serve God  
with his best; and if I can then make out to you,  
that the time of youth is your best; I then cer-  
tainly prove that you ought to imploy this in  
God's service, and you must be left self-con-  
demn'd in your own consciences, if you do not  
do so. Shall I then ingage your attention to these  
following evidences hereof?

I. The time of youth is our best, and ought  
therefore to be consecrated to the service of  
God; because it is the only time that we can  
then be said to have, and that we can serve God  
in. It is the present time that is always the best,  
because we can be sure of no other. The time  
to come, which we are so very prone to reckon  
Q upon,

Sermon upon, and especially which we easily promise

VIII. our selves when we are young, is the most un-

certain thing in the world, and what we may never see; it may, for ought we know, prove to be only a meer fiction of our own brains; death being, it may be, between us and that. And therefore for young persons to think of dedicating their advanc'd age to God and his service, and to neglect it at present, is truly ridiculous; for it is a denying him what they have to offer, and an offering him nothing at all; or a pretending to offer him what they have not instead of it. Let us suppose, what is a very supposable case, that the days of thy youth are the only ones which God has design'd thou should'st live here in the world: Let us suppose thou art to make one of the number of those myriads that die in the beginning of their days; and if God has not assur'd thee some way or other of an exemption, I am sure there is no absurdity in the supposition: I say, let us suppose this of thee, and what a strange and unreasonable conduct will thine appear to be? A reasonable creature sent into the world to seek and serve God, and made capable of it, and that had time for it, but that went out of the world and spent all his time in an utter disregard and neglect of God; and a forgetfulness of the principal end and main business of life. If this be unreasonable, it is unreasonable that thou shouldst by any delays put it to the hazard; and it is thy concern to dedicate thy youthful days to his service. And indeed, the uncertainty of time to come is sufficient to shew how preferable the present is, and how much fitter that is for the service of God. How easy are men to believe this in cases which concern their temporal advantage!



vantage! Who is there, that having it referred to his choice, whether to have an estate here, that is in the country where he lives, settled upon him, or to wait for returns of an equal value to be brought from a far country, over a tempestuous and wide sea, in a weak and leaky vessel, would not prefer the former as most sure and certain? Why should we not have the same thoughts, and act in the like manner when we are choosing the fittest time for the service of God? Why should we not judge that the present time, that is actually given us, is infinitely preferable to that which depends upon the continuance of our lives, a poor thin vapour, which a thousand blasts may disperse and extinguish, tho' it gives a little light for the present.

Sermon  
VIII.

James iv.  
14.

In short, if there is any necessity that you should serve God at all (and who is so stupid as to think there is not?) there is a necessity of your doing so now in the days of your youth; because that otherwise it may be utterly impossible you should ever serve him at all.

2. If life were never so certain, yet still would the days of your youth be your best, and the most fit for you to ingage heartily in the service of God; and if you begin then, you have the greatest advantages for his service. This is what they that are young will not readily believe: They think religion and the service of God are too grave, serious, and melancholy things for them to mind while they are young; that they suit well enough those that are aged; but as to themselves, mirth, diversion, and pleasure they imagine to be more proper for them to mind: And therefore there is nothing more common than for such to put off the serious minding the service of God to the time to come. Now if it

Sermon appear that youth is the properest time to mind  
 VIII. this in, methinks that should determine such  
 against all procrastinations and dilatory excuses.

Now that this is the fittest time for us to begin,  
 will appear ;

1. Because it is the time when persons are  
 ordinarily of the most teachable disposition. It  
 is seldom such ever arrive to any great per-  
 fection, nay, or to a tolerable skill in any art or  
 science, who did not apply themselves to the  
 learning of it while they were young : The  
 minds of the young are more easily form'd, and  
 they are more ready to receive direction than  
 others. It is not easy for a person, who has ne-  
 ver made any trial, to imagine how unteachable  
 those are who are grown old in their ignorance.

And upon this account, as well as others, it is so  
 necessary to *train up a child in the way that he*  
*should go* : And really a good measure and degree  
 of spiritual knowledge and understanding in reli-  
 gion is seldom attain'd where persons have suf-  
 fered this time of learning to pass away neg-  
 lected ; and believe it, a thorough acquaintance  
 with religion requires our as diligent embracing  
 all advantages for it, and so among others our  
 applying the time of youth to it, as any thing  
 else that we would willingly acquire the know-  
 ledge of.

2. Youth is the fittest time for the service of  
 God, because men are then most active and vi-  
 gorous, their spirits are then ordinarily most  
 brisk and lively, their strength most firm, and  
 their health more settled. When old age comes,  
 a vast train of infirmities come along with it ;  
 the senses are then impair'd as well as the un-  
 derstanding weaken'd ; then the smallest thing  
 becomes a burden thro' the decay of strength ;  
 and

Prov. xxii.  
 6.



and a man becomes almost of necessity slow and unactive; and therefore that is an age wherein little service is to be expected from a person. And when is it that men should think of serving God, but when by reason of the strength both of their bodies and minds, they are most fit for service? Is it a becoming thing to give God only the refuse and dregs of our days, and to resolve upon beginning then first to serve him, when we are indeed become fit for no service at all?

3. Youth is the most proper time to set about the service of God in, because therein persons have the most leisure for it, being then least involved and intangled with the cares and concerns of this world. The cares of this world are of a pernicious tendency, they choke the word that men hear, and which it may be they hear with pleasure; and so they become unfruitful. There's no Christian, who is not sensible that these, as they prevail, are a mighty hindrance to him. Matthew  
xiii. 22.

And what better course then can men take, than that they should heartily mind religion, while they are as yet most free from those cares? and when is that but in the time of youth? You little think how much you may hereafter have your thoughts disturb'd and distracted with such things; you little know what a difference will be made as to the leisure and composure of your minds; when instead of being cared for by others, you shall have your selves and others too to care and provide for.

And if you do not like now to apply your selves to this, how unlikely will you be to do so hereafter, when you will have so many other thoughts to interrupt you in it, and take you off from it!

Sermon

VIII.



4. In youth the mind is least harden'd in sin, and the habits of sin are weakest, and therefore then from your own disposition you are fittest for the work. Habits are acquir'd and strengthen'd by frequently repeated acts, and an accustomedness to sin hardens the heart, and renders a person the more obstinate and wilful in sinning. Now the sooner men set out in religion, the less hard must the heart be suppos'd to be, and the less must the habits of sin be confirm'd and strengthen'd in men. And though it is true, there is an alienation and estrangement of heart from God, and the things of God, that is natural to us as apostate creatures, and this will be always an hindrance to us in this great work; yet assuredly the longer it remains uncured, the greater hindrance it will be. You can never expect less opposition and hindrance from it than now, while there is yet a softness and tenderness remaining therein, which will, by your neglect of God, and going on in sin, by degrees wear off.

5. Youth may be supposed the fittest time for the service of God, in as much as then men have least resisted the Holy Ghost, and quenched his motions, and so may with the more encouragement expect his aid and help to farther them in this work. We read of such a thing as *quenching, vexing, and grieving the spirit of God*, and we are earnestly in the scripture exhorted not to do so. And how is this done but by a not complying with his motions, and accepting the offers he makes to us? And is it a wonder if such a carriage be resented, and if the longer men do so, the more the spirit of God does retire and withdraw from them? We see God

1 Thess. v.

19.

Isa. lxiii.

10.

Eph. iv.

30.

Gen. vi. 3. resolves that his *spirit shall not always strive with*

*man;*



*man*; and it is obvious by experience, that upon provocations he does withdraw from them. Sermon VIII.

And can any thing be more fatal than to have him abandon us, and leave us to our selves? How impossible is it we should ever turn to God, or serve him at all if we are left of him! since we are so insufficient of our selves for any thing that is good. What then is the likeliest course to prevent this, but that we should, early in the days of our youth, fall in with his motions; and that now while he is urging us we turn to God, and serve him with all our heart? I am sure the longer we put off this, the more do we grieve him and provoke him to be gone. Dread then the thoughts of ever turning a deaf ear to his call more, and of refusing him even at this very time, lest God should resolve against thee:

“ My spirit has striven hitherto with this sinner,  
 “ but in vain; but now he shall strive with  
 “ him no more. I have now done with him,  
 “ and he shall hear no more of my despis’d  
 “ offers, nor any more reject the motions of my  
 “ spirit: Let him now take his own course, he  
 “ shall for a while hear no more from me till  
 “ I speak in quite another manner, and *rend* Hof. xiii. 8.  
 “ the cawl of his heart, and take away his re-  
 “ bellious soul.

6. This is the best time for you to set out in the service of God; because if you do so, your whole life will be the better for it. When a person has once in his early days fix’d his choice, and determin’d that he will serve and live to God, and has bound himself in solemn vows to be his, this will have an influence upon him afterwards. A man then looks upon himself as fixed for his whole life, and as ingaged for ever; and what an advantage is this against the temptations

Sermon tations of the devil, the world, and the flesh;  
 VIII. (which a man must expect to meet with) when  
 he considers with himself whose he is, and to  
 whom he has devoted himself!

7. This is the best time, because we are then  
 like to be the greatest proficient in religion, if  
 we make use of it. The sooner we begin, the  
 longer time shall we have to make progress in;  
 and the more mature are all divine graces like  
 to be in our souls. It is our duty not only to  
 have grace, but to *grow* in it, and to *press after*  
*perfection*, as the apostle did, *Phil. iii. 11, &c.*  
 And are we ever like to do any thing considera-  
 ble, if by our neglect we cut short our own time for  
 the work, and put it off till we are least fit for it?

And thus have I shewn you, that if you would  
 serve God with the best of your time, you must  
 begin in your youth. Shall I then prevail with  
 any, or with all of you that are young, that  
 you would now do so. Methinks, it is an in-  
 couragement to speak to those who are young,  
 before their minds are as yet harden'd by a  
 custom of sinning, there is somewhat more hope  
 of prevailing; especially when they shew them-  
 selves forward and ready to hear.

Sirs, your great Creator calls upon you this  
 day, and challenges your present and immedi-  
 ate remembrance of him, and that you would  
 now *give him your hearts*; and that you  
 would now, without any more delay, ingage  
 in his service. You are the hopes of the church  
 of God, and upon you the keeping up of the  
 credit and power of religion does greatly lie.  
 If you and the generation that is rising with  
 you, should as much degenerate as the last  
 has done, religion is in a fair way to be lost, so  
 greatly are we degenerated; but if those that are

young



young do now earnestly mind the service of God, this will be a means to revive and keep up decaying and sinking religion in the world. Give me leave therefore to suppose you willing (I know that some of you are willing) to begin with God in your early days, let me then lay before you some advice with reference hereto.

1. Look back upon the youthful sins you have committed, and repent of them. However some persons may be ready to surmise they are too young for the service of God, yet I am sure none of you are so young but that you have offended him. *Youthful sins are a burden in old age*, Psal. xxv. 7. Job xiii. 26. Look over those then now, while they are most fresh in your memories, to be humbled for them; and let the view of them lead you to consider the depravation and corruption of your nature, and make you lie low before God. There's little hope of your conversion and turning to God, till you come to see somewhat you should turn from and forsake. And it is for this end, in part, that I urge this, that you may, being heartily sorry and humbled for these, avoid them in the remainder of life.

*Flee* (says the apostle) *youthful lusts*. There are <sup>2 Tim. ii. 22.</sup> sins and temptations suited to every age of humane life, some particularly to that of youth; which therefore it is your concern to avoid with all your might; such as lying, disobedience to parents, profaning the Lord's day, evil company that leads to intemperance, and gaming, and uncleanness. He that would be the servant of God must avoid these, and be abased for whatever of them he is chargeable with in time past. I might name another instance too, which the apostle in his day suppos'd the younger persons addicted to; but for ought I see is as much the fault

Sermon fault of others, that they are prone to be *tattlers*  
 VIII. and *busy-bodies*. Converse much with your own  
 hearts and they will find you work enough, and  
 1 Tim. v. you will have little heart or leisure to meddle  
 13. with others.

2. Let me urge those that are young, that they would be sure make conscience of secret prayer. This is a duty in the performance of which we may expect to receive needful supplies from God, and wherever this duty is neglected, the soul must certainly wither and languish. You are to seek God early, in the days of your youth; but can there be any seeking him while you restrain prayer before him? If your wants don't put you upon this duty, and make you constant in it, there's little hopes that ever you will come to any thing in religion.

3. Endeavour now to gain a through acquaintance with the will of God, and the nature of our holy religion. Now is the time for you to acquire a good stock of knowledge, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Study then now the holy scriptures, read much in them, and such books as serve to explain them, and inculcate the duties they prescribe. This is the way to keep you from youthful sins, *Psal.* cxix. 9. and to make you settled and confirmed in your holy religion, not liable to be carried about with every wind of doctrine. Youth is much addicted, I know, to quite other things. Novels, plays, and romances, these please the fancies of such, and these are and have been the bane and ruin of our youth; they only serve to corrupt and debauch the mind, and to render religious matters unfavoury and unpleasant to a person. And I never expect to see any promising fruits of religion, where such a course is taken to nourish vice and wickedness: For what

is



is the design of our modern plays, but to dress up vice as handsomely as possible, and set it out to the best advantage to render it the more pleasing? whereas such is the corruption of our nature, that it is too too suitable to us already.

4. The principal thing of all is, that you would renew your covenant with God, and avouch that God to whom you are devoted as your God. I now put you in mind of your privilege: You are all the children of God, and of the covenant, as born within the pale of the church, and admitted by God to the external sign and the external privileges of it. It is your privilege, that he does not count you as aliens and strangers from the covenants of promise, as he did of old our ancestors and others in their gentile state and condition. You are called into the fellowship of the Son of God, and the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is called upon you; God claims you then for his; and by the seal of his covenant confirms to you an interest in all the blessings of it, if you will be true and faithful in his covenant. The vows of God therefore are upon you, and you are bound unto the Lord to be his. Will you then now join your selves unto the Lord? Will you avouch this God to be your God by your own act and deed? This is what is expected and called for at your hands. God calls by his word, the spirit calls in your hearts; and the bride, the church, she says *come* too, and earnestly longs for your consent and compliance.

Rev. xxii.  
17.

Will you then now avouch this God as your own God, and take the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in all relations, in which they offer themselves to stand to you? The Father is willing and ready to receive you and imbrace you as  
he

Sermon he did the repenting prodigal. The Son of God

VIII. speaks to you from heaven, and offers you his blood to wash and cleanse you; and has pro-

Heb. xii. mis'd if you come, *he will in no wise cast you out*; and the holy Spirit is striving with you to ingage you to do so. Say then in thine heart, " 'Tis 25. John vi. 37.

" long enough, and too long, Lord, I have re-  
 " jected thy offer, and neglected thy service;  
 " but I can't bear the thoughts of doing so any  
 " longer. Now in obedience to thy call, with  
 " a sense of thy love, and a concern for my  
 " own welfare, I come unto thee. I embrace  
 " the offer of thy Christ, and do depend upon  
 " him as my only Saviour, upon his blood to  
 " wash me from my guilt, and his spirit to re-  
 " new me; and I solemnly vow and ingage my  
 " self to thee to be thine, thine to serve and obey  
 " thee for ever, and that in spite of all difficulties  
 " and opposition, taking up my rest and happi-  
 " ness in thee, and counting thy love as my life.

And let this be remember'd always by you in this matter, that when you join your selves to the Lord in covenant, it must be without reserves, it must be for ever, *Jer. l. 5*. If you are not willing to serve him in all things, and at all times, you are not willing to serve him at all.

And let not this discourage you, but remember too,

5. That you are to do this, not in your own strength, but the strength of Christ, which is sufficient for you, *Phil. iv. 13*.

6. Let me press it upon you, that you would  
 1 Tim. iii. be always humble and watchful: *Be not lifted*  
 6. *up with pride, lest you fall into a snare, and the*  
*condemnation of the devil*. Walk humbly with God; keep up a sense of your own weakness; and let that cause you to be circumspect in all your

ways,



ways, that you may keep yourselves unspotted from the world, and may be ready to defeat the devil in all his assaults, and to mortify all the deeds of the body. Sermon  
VIII.

7. Bear about upon your minds a sense of the judgment to come, which will be of mighty use and advantage to you to keep your minds in a serious and religious frame, and awe you against temptations.

I should now come to the second observation; and that is, that those who thus serve God with their best, God will have a respect to, and be pleased with them and their service. And this I shall consider briefly, and in the general, as an encouragement to the young to follow the advice already given.

Hearken then, you that are young, to the counsel of the Holy Ghost: *Seek God early: Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.* Is not this encouragement enough, that God the great King, and high above all Gods, will be then pleased with you, that he will take well at your hands the kindness of your youth? You may now offer your selves to him less tainted and defiled by sin than hereafter you will be able to do; and you have an assurance of his regard, *Prov. 8. 17.* And as an inclination and addictedness to pleasure is incident to your years, it will be a token of a particular respect, if you prefer the pleasures of his service to all others; and God will be especially delighted with this service, and doubt not but he will infinitely make it up to you. He will do it by the communications of his grace and spirit, and causing thee to abound in the fruits of righteousness: He will do it by the consolations of his spirit, while thy comforts abound, and thou art free from a multitude

Sermon multitude of those perplexing troublesome reflections others must experience in their souls; when they look back upon their youthful neglect and carelessness, and various enormities; and you will have this hereafter to plead if you live, and the infirmities of old age come upon you, when you will need such comfort, *Psal. lxxi. 17, 18.*

And whatever has been said to the young, I would not have the aged, that have let the time of their youth slip away neglected, despair, as tho' there was no hope: They have render'd the work more hard, have made more work for repentance; but yet still if they are sincerely and heartily willing to return unto God, he will not reject them; and tho' the work will be now harder, yet since it is necessary, they must apply the more diligence:

But it is with you that are young I am especially treating this day; and with you I have most hope of prevailing. I have been urging you to your duty; let it be now your care to perform and practise it. The choice and determination lies upon you: Choose you whom you will serve: I know what your sense ordinarily is, the wise man has exprest it; *Eccles. xi. 9. Rejoyce O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.* Such language as this would please young men; and if all the scripture ran in just this strain, without any addition, it would make them fond of their bibles. This would lull them asleep in their sins; but alas, there is a better sarcasm in the words, and the next words sound like a clap of thunder, to awaken men out of their sleep; *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.*



*The Acceptableness of serving God  
with our best.*

A SECOND

S E R M O N

TO YOUNG PEOPLE, ON

GENESIS IV. 4.

*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering.*

I HAVE raised two observations from the Sermon  
words : IX.

- I. That God is to be served with the very best that we have. The reasonableness of this has been shewn, and some instances have been mention'd of that best we are to serve him with ; and one, that is, the best of our time (the time of youth) has been particularly insisted on : And I have evidenced to you, that that is our best, and we ought therefore to devote it to the service of God. I have now the most encouraging motive to set before you, to ingage you all accordingly to

*The Acceptableness of*

to dedicate your best to God's service; and that is contain'd in the second observation, which I now proceed to speak to:

- G II. That where persons do thus serve God with their best, God will have a respect to them and their service. *And the Lord had a respect to Abel and his offering.*

When the apostle is speaking of the faith of *Abraham*, he says, *Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness*, Rom. iv. 23, 24. Now, adds he, *it was not written for his sake alone, but for us also*. And so in like manner say I, *God had respect to Abel and his offering*; this was not written for his sake alone, but for ours also, to whom and whose offerings God will have a like respect and regard, if we serve him in like manner as he did; that is, with the best we have. And indeed we may see this plainly in the history, a part of which is the text, which shews that God does not accept the persons of men, but as there is good reason for it from the difference between them and others.

When God had thus a respect to *Abel* and his offering, to *Cain* and his offering he had not respect, as it follows here immediately after the text; upon this *Cain* shews himself displeased: And ver. 6. God debates the matter with him. *And the Lord said to Cain, why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?* Which plainly speaks thus much, that *Cain*, if he had served God as his brother *Abel* did, had met with the same acceptance. Nay, and that whosoever serves God in like manner shall be accepted of him. For God herein appeals to him concerning the benignity and righteousness of his own nature. So that the



the expostulation of God with *Cain* is of as great Sermon force, with regard to every one of you. If IX. *thou* dost well, shalt not *thou* be accepted? Will not God shew the same respect to thee, and thy service, as he did to *Abel* and his offering?

The forcibleness of the motive is the chief thing I design farther to insist upon from these words. And to represent that, no more is necessary than to consider the several things that are contained in the words themselves.

I. We may consider whose respect is here spoken of. The *Lord* had respect: and certainly there is great force in that consideration. There is naturally in all men a desire after respect; the love they bear, and the value which they set upon themselves does prompt them to desire that others should value them also: And tho' a man may be indifferent about the regard of inconsiderable persons whom he despises, yet when we have a particular esteem and value for a person, it is natural to us to desire that such should value us.

How studious therefore are men to insinuate themselves into those that have the name and reputation of wise and good men! And especially the esteem of great men, of kings and princes, is highly thought of and labour'd after; and men set a value upon themselves whenever they can obtain it. Now certainly there is much greater reason that we should value the respect of God.

Must it not be a far greater thing for us to be in the favour of God, and to be honour'd by him, than by all the world? Was it not a sordid temper which Christ taxes the *Pharisees* with, and such as we cannot but very much condemn, that while they received honour one of another, they sought not the honour which came from God only; John v. 44.

Sermon and that they loved the praise of men more than  
 IX. the praise of God? Whatever makes us covet the  
 favour and respect of men, should make us much  
 more covet the esteem of God.

John xii.

43.

Is it mens wisdom that begets in us such a  
 desire to be thought well of by them? And who  
 is it that regards the judgment of a fool? The  
 Lord is infinite in wisdom, and his understand-  
 ing is unsearchable; he does not, he cannot err  
 in judgment. Men do easily mistake, they many  
 times censure and judge hardly of those they  
 ought to approve; and they approve of those  
 they should dislike. They are too apt to be par-  
 tial, and to be too much led by a fond and blind  
 affection, and by little interests and considera-  
 tions; but these can have no place in the all-  
 wise God. Nor is it possible for him to be de-  
 ceived or imposed upon, as men easily are.  
 They are not able to dive into the secret springs  
 of our actions, which yet is necessary in order  
 to the forming a sure and certain judgment of us.  
 Jer. xvii. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things; and there-  
 fore no man knoweth the things of a man, save the  
 spirit of man that is in him; but God searches the  
 heart, and tries the reins, and nothing is hid  
 from him. And therefore the apostle shews what  
 is the truly valuable respect, when he speaks of  
 those that are sincere, and whose hearts are cir-  
 cumcised; whose praise is not of men, but of God.  
 Rom. ii. 29. And what he says of a man's own commending  
 himself, may be said of his being commended  
 by all others: For not he that commendeth himself  
 (for that is commended of others) is approved, but  
 whom the Lord commendeth.  
 2 Cor. x. 18.

Rom. ii.

29.

2 Cor. x.

18.

Or if we value mens judgments for their ho-  
 linefs and goodness, we have much greater rea-  
 son to value God's, since there is none holy as  
 the



the Lord, and *he is of purer eyes than to behold*, Sermon  
or take pleasure in, *iniquity*. Or if the great- IX.  
ness and majesty of princes and great men dazle  
our eyes, and raises our ambition, and sets us Hab. i. 13.  
upon courting their respect; what shall we think  
of God, who is a great King, and high above  
all Gods; and to whom none is to compare ei-  
ther in heaven or in earth; whose power and  
glory are as unsearchable as his wisdom, and who  
is Lord of the universe; who has display'd  
his power and glory in so conspicuous a manner Psal. xix. 2.  
by the works of his hands? *The heavens declare  
his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy  
work.* What should we not most readily do to  
conciliate respect from him? Is there any thing  
we can possibly do that will be of such conse-  
quence, and shall we stick at it? Will our de-  
voting our best to him, and serving him there-  
with, turn to such an account, and shall we  
not most readily and cheerfully do so? Is the  
seeking and serving him in the first place, and  
in the days of our youth, what will be of such  
moment, and shall we think we can ever begin  
too soon?

2. Let it be consider'd what it is that this  
great, wise, and holy God, our Lord and King,  
has a respect and regard to, in those that do so  
serve him, and that is, both their *persons* and  
their *services*. *And the Lord had a respect to Abel  
and his offering*: Where you are to observe the  
order; God had a respect first to *Abel*, and then  
to his offering. The offering could not have  
been pleasing to God, if he that offer'd it had  
not been so too. You see God sets light by sa-  
crifices, even the most costly of them, when they  
were offered by wicked and ungodly men, *Isa. i.*

*11-15.* And therefore God calls upon them to

Sermon *wash themselves, and to make themselves clean, to put away the evil of their doing from before his eyes, to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, ver. 16, 17.*  
 IX. There was a necessity that their persons should first be clean and pleasing to God, before their services and oblations could possibly be so.

And the wise man tells us, Prov. xv. 8. *That the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight.* By which you may plainly see, that the disposition of the worshiper is a main consideration in the success of the service. The most costly service of a profligate wretch is not at all regarded; nay, it is despised and loathed; but the very prayer of the upright, which costs nothing, is God's delight.

See therefore what the apostle prescribes in order to our speeding in prayer, 1 Tim. ii. 8. A wicked heart, an ungodly course of life, a base principle and design, will marr and spoil any religious service that men perform; but where the heart is right in the sight of God, and the service is performed in sincerity, God has there a respect both to the person and to his service. And what a powerful and ingaging motive should this be! What can we desire more than that God should have a gracious regard to both our persons and services? If these are both right before him, we need not be solicitous about more. If we have any good design, we must necessarily aim at this in the service we offer to God. Why should men pray, hear, read, or do any other duties, if they are indifferent whether God regard them or no? And if this is the great end men are to propose to themselves, should they not use the most likely and proper means in order to the attaining of it?



*serving God with our best.* 245

It is by this very thing the misery or the happiness of their condition is to be judged of. As IX. they stand in the esteem of God, so are they blessed, or wretched and forlorn: For if God has a respect to us, we need not matter though all the world should despise and contemn us: *For if God be for us, who can be against us?* But if he does not respect us and our offerings, how deplorable does our condition become, even as *Gain's*, whose case that was!

And this now is a forcible argument to press that which I have been recommending to you. For if you serve God with the very best you have, as *Abel* did, that's a certain sign of the uprightness and sincerity of your hearts toward God; and so is a sure evidence that God accepts both you and your services. There's nothing but a sincere, upright temper of mind that will engage a person thus to serve God. Take any wicked insincere man in the world, and self is certainly his idol which he is serving, and the great Lord that he subjects himself to and obeys. Self-seeking and self-pleasing are the great aims and designs of all such; and such an one therefore serves God no farther than is consistent with his selfish interest. Let his possessions, or his person be in danger for God and religion, and he denies and forsakes him without any more ado. When he may serve himself at the same time that he serves God, an extraordinary zeal may discover it self in him, as it did in *Jehu*: But when these are separated, he may <sup>2 Kings x.</sup> then shew, as *Jehu* also did, that he prefers his <sup>16.</sup> own interest to God's.

But when a person is heartily concern'd to <sup>5. 29.</sup> consecrate to God the very best that he has, and prefers the serving God rather than his own

Sermon divers lusts and pleasures therewith ; this be-  
 IX. speaks the man's heart to be upright and sincere  
 towards God ; and may give him assurance that  
 God will have a respect to him and his service.

What an encouragement then should this be  
 to those that are young ? If you devote your  
 early days to the service of your great Creator,  
 you then serve him with your best ; this will be  
 a comfortable evidence of the sincerity of your  
 hearts towards God ; And what a glorious ad-  
 vantage will you have of God's respect both to  
 you and your service ! Let us suppose that you  
 have a great old age to live to, methinks even  
 that, the hope of which is so apt to tempt others  
 to neglect God, should make you resolve to  
 serve him now, when you think with your  
 selves, if I do so, and withhold not from God  
 my best, all the services that I have to offer to  
 him as long as I live, shall be graciously re-  
 garded by him, and I shall not fail of an interest  
 in his favour.

3. Let us more particularly consider what  
 this respect of God, here spoken of, carries in  
 it. And though I doubt not you have a notion  
 of this, and somewhat concerning it has been  
 hinted already, yet the more particular confi-  
 deration of it may not be improper, with re-  
 lation to the design I am pursuing, to inforce  
 and press upon you an imitation of the noble  
 example set before us in the text.

1. This respect of God, here spoken of, does  
 import a gracious *approbation* both of the per-  
 son and of his services. That this does import  
 such an approbation of his person the apostle in-  
 forms us, *Heb. xi. 4. By faith Abel offered unto*  
*God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he*  
*obtain'd witness that he was righteous.* So that

God's



God's having a respect to him imports his approving him as a righteous person. And hence the title which our Saviour gives him, is that of *righteous Abel*, Mat. xxiii. 35. And to approve a person as righteous, is the same as to justify him. He then who serves God with the best that he has, is a person approv'd, acquitted and justify'd of God; than which nothing is of greater importance to such sinful creatures as we are.

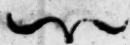
*We have all sin'd, and are subject to the righteous judgment of God,* and obnoxious to his wrath. *Rom. iii. 23. ver. 19.*

And do we know what the wrath of an almighty being means? And can we yet look upon it as an indifferent matter, whether we are delivered from it or no? Let me appeal to you, can you, any of you, be too young, to be in a state of salvation; to be delivered from hell and everlasting vengeance? Or can it be too soon, to seek after these things? Or can it be wisdom and prudence for you to put such matters as these to a risque or hazard, even a day longer, and much more to old age or sickness? The persons, the souls and bodies of the young, as well as the old, are in imminent danger of destruction, and therefore is it so necessary for them to take care of them, while they may, and now in the time of youth to seek approbation and justification from God.

He that is approved of God is approved indeed: This is more than to be approved of all the world besides. And as thy person, so thy services too, shall in this course gain his approbation and respect: A most blessed consequence of thy serving him, and that which one would think thou shouldst be above all other things concern'd about in the serving him.

Sermon

IX.



It is so with all those that serve God in sincerity and truth. When such an one prays, what is he most solicitous about, but how he may approve his heart to God, and offer up a well ordered prayer to God; and that his prayer being pleasing to God he may prevail with him? He has such a concern as that which the *Psalmist* expresses, *Psal.* cxli. 2. And how does a solicitude about this, when he reflects upon his defects in the duty, sink his spirit? Nay, and persons who have neglected God thro' the course of their lives, when they come to be in the views of death, and entertain more serious thoughts of this matter, how readily do they then shew their concern about it? "And will God now accept  
 " of such an one as me? Will he now have a  
 " regard to my services, or accept and answer  
 " these prayers? Oh! I fear he will not; but  
 " that all I can do will now be rejected by him.

Tell me then, why should you not have the same concern now? Why should you not be as solicitous and desirous now that God should regard and be pleased with your services? And if you are, why should you not choose this course to serve God with your best; and so you that are young to offer the beginning of your days, and the choicest of your time and strength to him?

2. This respect of God does import his love, pleasure, and *delight*. And this, though it be somewhat more, yet is necessarily consequent upon the former: For such is the holiness of God's nature, that whomsoever his wisdom does approve, his love rests upon, and he takes delight and pleasure in. And the same disposition, which is the reason of his approbation, is also of his love and delight. It is his own image  
 and



and likeness, which he beholds in his creatures, which he approves, and this he cannot but love. There is a special love that God bears to, and a value that he sets upon his people, and a peculiar delight he takes in their services. The scripture is full of setting forth this to us, and oftentimes in the most moving expressions. See *Zeph. iii. 17. Mal. iii. 17.* As the persons, so all the services of such are delightful and pleasing to him, *Prov. xv. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 9.* And therefore they may present them to God with a humble boldness and confidence in him for acceptance.

The services which the christian, by reason of his humility, and the sense of his own weakness, is displeased with, and ready perhaps to condemn, are such as God does approve of and delight in. And is not the love of God our life? Is not his loving kindness better than life? Every man should value and seek this as his chief and best happiness; and does he ever seek it as he ought, while he offers not to God the very best that he has in order to obtain it?

Particularly you that are yet in your youth; the love and favour of God is as necessary for you, as for any that are older. You, as well as others, have noble souls that can find rest in none but God, and therefore it is your concern to seek his favour now with your whole heart, and to offer to God the very best of your time. And what can I say more to incourage and engage you to this, than to assure you in the name of the great God, of his love to your persons, and his accepting your services, and making them successful if you do so? Would you see the warrant I have for this; See *Prov. viii. 17. I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.* Oh what a pleasant sound should such words

Sermon words have in your ears? What joy, what

**IX.** thankfulness, what zeal, what desire and resolution should this kindle in your hearts? "Is God  
 " more especially pleas'd with those that seek  
 " him early? Are his promises peculiarly made  
 " to them? and are they the objects of his  
 " love? By the grace of God I will never slip  
 " this opportunity; but now, without any more  
 " delay, while youth lasts, I will set about this  
 " course, and make it my business to offer to  
 " God this so acceptable service. Sirs, I can  
 assure you, that God does take particular notice  
 and regard of such as set out early in his service.  
 How many are the instances that might be given  
 of such, as being early instances of piety, were  
 eminent objects of God's favour? Such was the  
 person spoken of in the text, if we consider his  
 life according to the ordinary length of life at  
 that time; if not in a more strict sense, according  
 to the present length of life, as I observ'd  
 before. Such probably was *Enoch* who walked  
 with God 300 years, after he begat *Methuselah*,  
*Gen. v. 22.* And it is not improbable before too:  
 But even then he was but 65 years old, which  
 according to a comparison of mens lives then  
 and now, was very young. The like are the  
 instances of *Isaac*, of *Jacob*, *Joseph*, *Moses*, *David*,  
*Daniel*, *Shadrach*, *Mesbach*, and *Abednego*. These  
 all did in their young days apply themselves to  
 the service of God, and you know there are  
 special encomiums given of them in the holy  
 scriptures; and they were eminent for their interest  
 in the favour of God. You may see what  
 particular notice is taken of *Abijah*, in whom  
 there was some good thing found toward the  
 Lord God of Hosts, when he was but a child,  
*1 Kings xiv. 13.* And so in the new testament I  
 might



might take notice of *Timothy*, who from a child *Sermon*  
*had known the holy scriptures*; of *John* the bap- IX.  
 tist, and *John* the apostle, who being, as is *Tim. iii.*  
 generally, and not without probable reason, <sup>15.</sup>  
 thought to have been the youngest of his apo-  
 stles, was he whom *Jesus* loved; he that lay in  
 his bosom, and whom the others imploy'd to  
 ask of our Saviour, what they wanted to be in-  
 form'd in, because they thought him to have  
 most interest in him. And I might instance  
 in our Saviour himself, concerning whom the  
 evangelist has recorded, *that he increased in*  
*wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and*  
*man*, Luke ii. 52. It should fill us with won-  
 der, that God should have ever any regard  
 to such as we are; and it must be notorious  
 folly and baseness if we stick at any thing  
 that is necessary in order thereunto, or that will  
 be any means to farther us herein. You that  
 are young, are capable of pleasing, nay, of  
 delighting your creator more than those who  
 have carelessly spent their youth are capable of  
 doing. And therefore, I may beseech you by  
 the mercy, the kindness and love of God, as you  
 set any value upon these, that you would now,  
 out of hand, ingage in his service.

3. This respect of God must certainly denote  
 or infer a resolution to bestow a suitable and  
 glorious *reward*. The love and favour of God  
 is not an insignificant and useless thing. It is  
 natural to us to have a desire and inclination to  
 do good to those whom we love; and it is a  
 certain thing, that God's love will ingage him  
 to bestow the most excellent rewards upon such  
 as share in it, upon such as diligently and faith-  
 fully serve him with the best they have; and  
 that are careful that as little of their time as  
 is

Sermon is possible should be lost from his service; and

IX. therefore set out in the beginning of their days therein. *Those that honour God, he will honour*; and though we cannot merit by our service, yet the more we serve him, the more may we expect from him. And the rewards we may look for from him, if we are early devoted to his service, are such as are given in this world as well as in the next: For *godliness has the promises of the life that now is, and that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

1 Sam. ii.  
30.

1. You may expect rewards from him *in this life*; and such advantages as these attend an early piety.

1. Hereby God becomes engaged to us, as our conductor and guide through the whole course of our lives. If a man were to sail over a tempestuous sea, that abounded with many dangerous rocks, would he not, if he were unacquainted with them, be concerned to have an able and skilful pilot? You little think what the dangers are, which you are like to meet with, while you are passing through this world. Many are the rocks upon which, if you should be left to your own foresight and conduct, you would split, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, even to your everlasting undoing. Your unacquaintedness with the world, does render you unapprehensive what an insnaring, and at the same time deadly, enemy it is. The restraints you are, it may be, now under, prevent many temptations, which hereafter your liberty may bring along with it. The farther you come into the world, the more you may experience how deadly a snare evil company and a bad example are; the more powerful you may expect the workings of inward corruption,

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ruption, and the allurements of worldly objects will prove. Sermon IX.

And the more advantage the devil has by reason of these, the more danger you will be in of mischief through his improving them. What then is your wisdom, but now at first to ingage God on your side, that you may be kept from these paths of the destroyer? Choose God now as the guide of your lives, and that's the way to be preserv'd from mischief. Is there no pleasure in looking forward upon time to come, and considering that we have an all-sufficient God and guide to carry us through all? This was the *Psalmist's* comfort, *Psal.* lxxiii. 24. and xxiii. 3, 4, 6. God's covenant engages him to this; to those that lay hold of it. And therefore if now thou dost lay hold of it, however long thou should'st live, thou art sure of an able and faithful guide.

2. All God's dispensations toward you will be according to his covenant favour and love. There's a variety in his providences, but they all tend to the good of those that are his. By obtaining then an interest now in his favour, thou layest in for the ease of thy whole life. *All things*, thou may'st be assured, *shall work together for thy good*. Thy mercies will carry a double sweetness in them, when thou considerest them as bestow'd by thine own God, and as the fruits of his special love and kindness; and thy afflictions will be lightned too, when thou considerest that tho' they are sharp, yet they have the nature of remedies, and are necessary for thy own benefit; and therefore ordered and directed by that same love. And therefore we may add,

3. That this is the best way to settle and establish the ease and quiet of our own minds thro' the

Sermon the course of our lives. A man can never enjoy  
 IX. himself that has not ease and peace in his own  
 conscience. And though wicked men may seem

Jonah i. 4,  
 5.

to have it, yet their peace is only like the security of a man in his sleep in the midst of danger. It is like the quiet of the prophet *Jonah*, when he was fast asleep in the midst of a tempest, when the ship was ready every moment to sink. But the true peace, which only is a desirable blessing, is built upon solid grounds, and is to be obtain'd in another course, *Psal. cxix. 165. Prov. iii. 1, 2. Psal. xix. 11.* And the sooner we devote our selves to God, the more likely way do we take to settle and establish our peace. It is with many a sorrowful groan, persons in their advanc'd years are forced to review the sins and transgressions of youth. The remembrance of sin then proves bitter; however the commission of it seem'd sweet. It is guilt in the conscience that disturbs the peace of it, and makes persons *like the troubled sea, that cannot rest.* While God then is neglected, and sin is continued in, thou art laying up a stock of perplexity and trouble for thy self, which thou wilt find such, even if hereafter thou shouldst turn to God.

Isa. lvii.  
 20.

And besides that, how likely a way is this to settle thy peace about the state of thy soul? The more clear conscience is by thy early breaking of thy sins, and the more careful thou hast been betimes to turn to God, and devote thy self to him, and the sooner thou settlest thy peace with God, the more likely art thou to settle the peace of thy own conscience too. God remembers the kindness of such persons youth; and this is one way that he takes to reward it, by giving them inward peace in the sense of his

love,



*Serving G O D with our best.*

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Sermon

IX.

love, and the shedding abroad of that in their souls : The less his spirit is grieved, the more freely may we suppose he is imparted both as a spirit of grace, and of consolation ; and as the latter certainly secures our peace, so the former lays a foundation for it ; for the more of his influences we experience as a spirit of grace, the more we shall improve in virtue ; and the more we do so, the more discernable, and so the more comfortable to our selves is it like to prove. And what more desirable than to be able to look back, and to know that the main business of life is not neglected ; but that we have secur'd peace with God, and provided for our eternal salvation ? Does conscience never perplex, never gripe you for want of this ? Does no such thought ever come into yours mind ? “ And  
“ what is like to become of me ? How sad is  
“ my case that am not yet reconcil'd to God !  
“ How can I bear his anger, that I dare venture  
“ to despise his love ! What if God should de-  
“ mand my soul of me, and instantly call me  
“ to an account, what provision have I made  
“ for such an hour ? How shall I be able  
“ to behold the face of my angry judge ? or  
“ stand at the tribunal of an almighty, but  
“ provok'd and incens'd God ?

Do not the terrors of the almighty make you afraid ? Well, if they do not now, it is possible they may do so before you leave the world. Death, when you apprehend it approaching, will change your notions, rouse your consciences, and make them cry out that there will be no silencing them. Then they bring mens sins fresh to their remembrance, and set them in order before them : And when they have nothing but their own guilt, an angry God, and death  
and

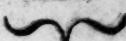
Sermon and hell in view, what wonder if they feel an  
 IX. extremity of anguish and misery in their own  
 souls?

“ Oh deplorable estate ! Oh wretched condi-  
 “ tion ! to be forced to leave this world before  
 “ I have made sure of a better ! To die now  
 “ without an interest in the favour of him who  
 “ is to dispose of me, and to determine my case  
 “ for ever, and is now about to do it ! Foolish  
 “ wretch ! that I could think this world of more  
 “ importance than his love ! and that I could  
 “ put off this chief concern, which I would now  
 “ give all the world if I could but take care of !  
 “ Ten thousand worlds, if I now had them,  
 “ would I give for one smile of his face, for  
 “ the least token of his favourable acceptance.  
 “ But I fear, I fear he resents my squandering  
 “ away my youth in the neglect of it ; and  
 “ that now it is too late : And that *though I*  
 “ *call upon him he will not hear*, though I cry  
 “ unto him he will not answer, and *though I*  
 “ *now seek him early, I shall not find him*.

Prov. i.  
 28.

This is perplexing trouble with a witness : But  
 now the seeking, the serving God betimes pre-  
 vents this. “ O blessed serenity of mind ! when  
 “ we can remember God without any cause of  
 “ being troubled. When conscience testifies,  
 “ thou dost not live as without God in the  
 “ world. Thou hast accepted his offered terms  
 “ of reconciliation, submitted to his Christ, thy  
 “ peace is made with God, thy sins are for-  
 “ given, God accepts thee, and there is no con-  
 “ demnation to thee. Thou may’st expect the  
 “ fruits of his love, and the fulfilment of his  
 “ promises. Wise is thy choice, the lines are  
 “ fallen to thee in pleasant places, and thou  
 “ hast a goodly heritage. Thou hast remember’d  
 “ thy



" thy Creator, and he will never forget thee. *Sermon*  
 " Thou hast chosen him, and he will never cast *IX.*  
 " thee off. 

4. An early piety is a good preparation for worldly troubles and afflictions; and the reason is, because such a settled peace is so excellent a remedy against them; and God is especially concern'd to support such under them. As God bears a special regard to such, so he will in a particular manner concern himself for them. And when thou hast *peace with God, through our Lord* *Rom. v.*  
*Jesus Christ,* thou may'st then well joy and *1, 2.*  
*glory in tribulations.* And this I the rather mention to obviate an objection against the text, and what has been said from it.

*Object.* Some may say, what sign is there that God had more respect to *Abel* than *Cain*? or where is his reward, since *Cain's* life is prolong'd, and *Abel* so soon loses his? If this be the case, where's the incouragement to serve him?

*Answer.* We must not speak wickedly for God, nor talk deceitfully for him, *Job xiii. 7.* And therefore in plain terms, a freedom from trouble in this world, is what he gives no incouragement to expect; nay, you are to expect affliction and trouble for his sake: And if thou can'st not like, or be willing, to submit to this, thou refusest his offer, and thou dost not serve God with thy best. Thy life is not then resigned and devoted to him, as it ought to be. Is thy life too dear to thee to be parted with for God's sake? and can'st thou not set more by his love than thy own life? and prefer the serving him to the living in the world? There's no room then for thy expecting he should have a respect to thee or thy service; thy heart is not right in his sight, nor hast thou any lot or portion in his love.

Sermon

IX.

A freedom then from trouble thou art not to expect ; but succour and support under it thou may'st. And whether thou compliest with his terms or no, as to a liableness to trouble, thy case may be the same ; and therefore it is an advantage to be thus prepar'd against it, by having our consciences easy, and divine supports secured to us : And if we give to God our early days, this we may depend upon in every trouble of life, that he will be with us therein, and carry us through all, readily imparting to us strength according to our exigence and need.

2. There are eternal rewards that God bestows, as well as temporal ; such as are too great for you now to conceive of. And yet, though the joys of all are unspeakable, we may well suppose that an early piety will be crown'd more gloriously, than that of those who begin late. The more thou servest God, the greater thy reward will be ; but the sooner thou beginnest, the more time wilt thou have to serve him, and the more service may'st thou do him, and so may'st expect the more exceeding weight of glory.

4. I might farther add, to inforce upon you your serving God with your best, that otherwise none of your service will be accepted. God looks upon himself as mocked by any other services. Would you see instances of this, you may see it in the instance of *Cain*, who brought an offering as well as *Abel*, and yet to *Cain* and his offering God had not respect, *ver. 5*. And why not, but because he did not serve God as *Abel* did, with his best. And so the young man in the gospel, though he went far, yet because he could not find in his heart to serve God with his possessions, and loved the world too well to part with



with it for God's sake, lost all his glittering shew *Sermon*  
and appearance, and fell short of heaven too. IX.

And is it not pity that all thou dost in religion should be lost; that thy hearing, praying, reading should be lost for want of giving God thine heart? Unless thou art absolutely devoted to him now, thy service is all vain, and will turn to no account: And *sin* (as God says to *ver. 7.*  
*Cain*) that is the punishment of it *lies at the door*; and it may be thy lot, as it was his, to complain, that *thy punishment proves greater ver. 13.*  
*than thou canst bear*. And if thou missest of acceptance with God, thou knowest what the consequence will prove. Thou knowest, did I say? thou knowest somewhat of it: Thou knowest it in general; but as no tongue can express it, so no heart can now conceive it fully. The damned that feel it, they alone know what it is. There are treasures of wrath laid up in store for God's enemies, and they must be cast into hell, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.

And now as I chose this text, with a particular regard to you that are young, let me now conclude with a particular address to you. You see what has been the design of these discourses, let me then put it to you; what has been, and is the effect of them? Take notice, that a particular account must be given of that message which God in his providence sends particularly to you. I put it then to thy conscience: Had the last discourse this effect upon thee, to bring thee in secret upon thy knees before God, to make such a solemn resignation of thy self to God, as thou wast then urged to, or to beg the grace and spirit of God to make thee heartily willing and able thus to dedicate thy self in the

Sermon days of thy youth to him? If it had not, set  
IX. it down as a lost sermon to thee; thou hast reason to fear thou didst not get any good by it.

I hope then it is in mercy to thee, that thou art thus call'd upon particularly again. Shall I then now prevail with thee, *to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth?* Now to accept of his offer, and to turn to him in and by his Christ? Seek him now, and his face evermore; and consecrate the first fruits of thy life to him as an earnest and pledge of the whole. As the old law required the offering of the *first ripe fruits* to God, whereby the whole crop was acknowledged to be his, and consecrated to God, and sanctified to the people's use: So the consecrating of thy youth to God, is but an acknowledgment of his just title and claim to the whole, and a sanctifying thy whole life to his service, and to thy own comfort.

Exod.  
xxiii. 26.

Prov. xxiii.  
26.

Hearken then to the call of God: *My son, give me thy heart*; and remember that the time of God's grace is set out by a day, to make you more watchful against delays, and more earnest in embracing his offers. 2 Cor. vi. 2. *Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

Matt. vi.  
33.

Psal. ii. 12.

Despise not then his salvation for one day, but now laying aside all delays, *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: Kiss the son lest he be angry*: Repent now of thy sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and give up thy self absolutely and intirely to him; trusting in his death and sacrifice, and the virtue of his intercession; take upon thee his yoke, and submit to his government; joyn thy self now to him, and to God in and by him, in a perpetual covenant; and his father shall be thy father, and his God thy God. All



All things urge thy speedy compliance : God Sermon  
in his providence waits, Christ calls by his IX.  
word and the voice of his blood ; the spirit urges  
and solicits thee ; angels and saints long to  
rejoice at thy repentance ; ministers and christi-  
an friends desire and pray for it ; and therefore,  
as God says to his people, urging them in the  
like case, *when shall it once be ?* Remember, Jer. xiii.  
judgment is certain, death is at hand, life is frail, <sup>27.</sup>  
opportunities are precious, sin is deceitful, the  
heart is false and treacherous in the promises  
that it makes about time to come, while the  
present is neglected ; the day of grace is short,  
and is passing away ; and therefore in one word,  
as the Holy Ghost saith, *to day if ye will hear* Heb. iii.  
*his voice, harden not your hearts.* 15.

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*The Nature and Advantage of a well-ordered Conversation.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

F U N E R A L

O F

Mr. L-----,

O N

PSALM L. 23, (latter part.)

*And to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God.*

Sermon  
X.

**N**OTHING has a greater tendency to promote the life and power of true religion, than the frequent and serious remembrance of the final judgment. And for this end is it often recommended to us in the holy scriptures, and particularly in this



this *Psalm*. In the fix first verses of the *Psalm*, Sermon  
we have a very affecting representation of the great God, as summoning men to judgment. X.

The expressions made use of are noble, and the figures lively. And though the judgment is represented as universal in the first verse, *The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof*: yet in the rest of the *Psalm* 'tis spoken of with a peculiar relation to God's people. They are favour'd with extraordinary privileges and advantages, and therefore the more may be expected from them: And as the oracles of God are given to them, so therein he addressees himself especially to them. *Out of Sion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shin'd*; and therefore the stricter reckoning will be made with them for the many talents they have been intrusted with. *Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.* And there is the more reason to call God's people to a particular application of this consideration, because they so often, from their external privileges, flatter themselves into security, while they neglect their plain duty. We daily see how prone the members of the christian church are to this; nor were the *Jews* of old less. Hence, when God had raised their attention by a most awful representation of judgment in the beginning of the *Psalm*, he then comes to expostulate the case with them, why they laid so much stress upon the external parts of religion, and neglected those

Sermon that were more substantial. And having very

X. sharply reprov'd them for their wickedness, in the two last verses of the *Psalms* we have, as it were, the application of the whole; and he brings the matter home upon their consciences, and requires them to lay it to heart. This is urged upon them with a severe threatening, ver. 22. *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* And here in the last verse we have a gracious direction given, how that threaten'd evil may be avoided. *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.* Wherein you may observe,

1. What God looks for at the hands of his people, as ever they would please him, and escape his vengeance, and the being torn in pieces by him; and that is to be glorified by them.

2. When it is that persons glorify him; and that is when they offer praise; *whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.* This is to be considered as opposed to bare external performances, such as sacrifices, &c. God accounts not himself glorified by these, so much as by the sincere praises of his people.

3. How 'tis we are to praise him; not barely with our lips, but with our lives. If we would please and glorify God, our vocal praises must be accompanied with a *well-order'd conversation.*

4. The happy and blessed advantage of such a course. God is never behind hand in his rewards. He will not fail to render them an abundant recompence. They that glorify him shall be glorified by him; for to such he *will shew the salvation of God.*

I shall confine my discourse wholly to the last clause of the verse: *And to him that ordereth his*



conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God. Sermon  
In speaking to which I will consider,  
X.

I. The person describ'd and characteriz'd:  
*To him that ordereth his conversation aright.*

II. The great advantage which belongs to  
such: *I will shew the salvation of God to him.*

I. The person described and characteriz'd:  
*One that ordereth his conversation aright.*

You see a blessing, and a very glorious one belongs to this character; and therefore you have the more reason diligently to attend to the account which I shall endeavour to give you of it from the holy scriptures. Our translation has well enough exprest the sense of the original, which though it says no more than *to him that disposes, or orders his way*, must necessarily be supposed to mean, that *orders it aright*; that takes some care, and uses some diligence about this matter. Dissolute persons take no care of their way, they act at random, and there is nothing of regularity and order to be found therein. I shall therefore take the words as well enough render'd by our translators: Only I would here observe, that whereas our *English* word *Conversation*, is often used with a peculiar regard to a person's external carriage and behaviour; there is no reason to take it under such a limitation in this place. It may very well include a person's whole behaviour, both toward God and man. And thus the same word is commonly render'd, *Way*, which is of the most comprehensive sense in the stile of the scripture.

Now this well order'd way, or conversation of a man, may be consider'd with respect, either to what is secret between God and a man's  
own

Sermon own soul, or what is obvious to the world.

X.



1. A well order'd conversation may be consider'd with respect to what is secret between God and a man's own soul. And concerning this, I shall only observe these two things :

1. He that orders his conversation aright, must be one whose heart is sincere and upright toward God. A man can never rightly order his way while he neglects and is wanting in this. Let his outward deportment be what it will, he is certainly out of his way, he has never set out right in it ; nor can the way he is in ever bring him to see the salvation of God. Men, indeed, cannot with any infallible certainty, discern one another's sincerity ; but as God does, there is nothing that sets a greater lustre upon a good conversation and outward behaviour in his sight. If a man's conversation be ever so decent in the eye of the world, yet if the principle he is acted by, and the end he aims at, is not right, what is such an one all the while, really and in God's account, but a gilded glittering hypocrite ? He makes a fine appearance in the eyes of man ; but is loathed and abhorred in the sight of God. A strictness in the outward behaviour, without an heart right in God's sight, is at best but like base metal, which however wash'd over, is of no worth in comparison of true sterling : Or, to use the comparison of our Saviour, *'tis like a sepulchre, fine and stately without, but within full of corruption and rottenness.*

Matthew  
xxiii. 27.

'Tis true, we must judge by outward appearance, and we sin against the rule of charity when we do otherwise, even though we should chance not to be mistaken in our judgment. But yet sincerity is a matter which cannot be too often inculcated, it being of so great concern, the

want



want of which will spoil every thing else in us Sermon  
that may seem commendable and praise-worthy. X.

Remember then, that if yours be a well-order'd conversation, it must flow from a true heart; from a good principle settled there, even faith in Christ, and love to God; it must be directed to a good end, the honour and glory of God; and if these do not influence your conversations, they are nothing worth, whatsoever they be.

2. He that orders his conversation aright toward God, must be strict in the most hidden and secret part of religion. There are duties incumbent on us, to which none but God and our own souls are privy; and these will be conscientiously minded where the heart is right in the sight of God. For instance, such an one will be watchful over his thoughts, endeavour after an heavenly frame of spirit, and strive to keep out whatever is contrary thereunto; and carefully quell the first and most secret workings of all irregular affections and inclinations, and diligently perform the duties of the closet: And withal, will be most solicitous about the inward work of religion in the more publick duties thereof. In short, such an one will endeavour to be that toward God in the very posture and working of his soul, that he would be thought to be, or that he makes any shew of in religious duties.

This is, as it were, the foundation or groundwork of a good conversation, without which it cannot really be, and without which, to be sure, no man can be said to be *holy in all manner of conversation*. There is nothing of holiness to the Lord in our conversations, when they are not order'd with a respect and regard to him; and we endeavour

not

Sermon not chiefly to approve our hearts to him in all that we do. And,



2. He that orders his conversation thus aright toward God in those things which are secret between God and his own soul, will do it likewise in those things that are obvious to the world. Men think sometimes, or rather perhaps say, that their hearts are right toward God, and thereupon become unconcern'd how they behave themselves in the eye of the world. But there cannot be a more fatal error and mistake. A wicked conversation infallibly bespeaks a wicked heart. If you are christians indeed, and have such an inward frame as I have been speaking of, you must and will shew it by a pure and well-order'd conversation before men. And see now how amiable and lovely a christian is, when his conversation appears to be agreeable to the christian rule, and consequently is order'd aright. And here the description of a conversation that is order'd aright, will lie in such things as these.

1. It must be a *sober* and *temperate* conversation. A man must be a great stranger to the christian rule that is not sensible how strictly this is required there: Nay, he must be utterly unacquainted with the lesson which the grace of God is design'd to teach men: For the apostle lets us know this is the first part of what it

**Tit. ii. 12.** teaches us, that *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly*. And if this should seem a small part of a well-order'd conversation, yet I am sure 'tis a very necessary one. And believe me, as the times now go, 'tis a considerable ornament among christians. We may now almost say of a sober man what *Solomon* says of a faithful one: *But a faithful man who can find?*  
**Prov. xx. 6.** And when a vice is become common, and the exam-

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examples many, and the temptations strong; Serm<sup>on</sup> the contrary virtue must appear the more charming; and it must be very agreeable to see men govern their appetites, and use God's creatures with a design to please him rather than themselves.

2. The conversation that is order'd aright, must be *harmless* and *innocent*, and no ways mischievous or prejudicial to others. They are very wide from a well-order'd conversation, whose delight is in doing mischief. Our Saviour has recommended it to us to join the *innocence* Mat. x. 16. *of the dove* with the *wisdom of the serpent*. 'Tis a sport only *to a fool to do mischief*; but a good Prov. x. 23. man, who would order his conversation by the christian rule, *rejoyceth not in iniquity*: He is I Cor. xiii. peaceable and quiet in his temper; he will not<sup>6</sup> provoke the anger of others against himself; nor have a hand in stirring up strife between friends. 'Tis no pleasure to such an one to impose upon the credulity of his neighbour; nor will he make a sport of his weakness. He *rejoyceth in the truth*; and *putting away lying*, he Eph. iv. *speaks truth* at all times *with his neighbour*. He<sup>25</sup> is one who has that regard to truth, that his word may be taken in the relation he gives of things, and in the promises he makes. He abhors what is flattering and fulsom on the one hand, and what is slanderous and detracting on the other.

There is a pestilent sort of people, whom the apostle smartly checks under the notion of *tattlers* I Tim. v. and *busy-bodies*; who are most free, or (as I may<sup>13</sup> rather say) bold with the good name and reputation of their neighbour; who in contradiction to the christian rule of *speaking evil of no man*, Tit. iii. 2. will hardly afford any a good word, or suffer them

Sermon them to pass without some severe censure ; and

X. who, when they cannot find a real crime, will feign some imaginary one to gratify their detracting tatling temper. This is a most mischievous humour, and very contrary to the spirit of christian charity, which *believeth all things*; and *hopeth all things*; and is more inclined to think and speak well, than ill of others.

And who is there that will make any doubt, whether this is not very agreeable in the conversation of others? Who will dislike a truly christian conversation in this respect in other men, when he finds it has been his own turn to have been the subject of discourse, and he has reaped the benefit of it? And methinks that, as a true glass, should shew a man, how amiable the same thing would render his own conversation.

3. The conversation that is order'd aright, Jam.iii.13. is *modest, humble, and lowly*. Who, says the apostle, *is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*. That charity which directs and governs such an one in ordering his conversation, teaches him *not to vaunt himself, not to behave himself unseemly, not to be puffed up*. 'Tis recommended to us, as you know,

1 Pet. v. 5. to be *clothed with humility*. What is more offensive and disagreeable than a surly, haughty, and assuming temper? This renders a man a burden to all that are about him: But where a person's carriage is truly modest and humble, how great an ornament is it? This makes him submissive to his superiors, gentle and affable to his inferiors, and obliging and courteous to his equals. 'Tis a misery these things are so much overlook'd and disregarded by christians, since they

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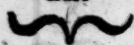


serve exceedingly to adorn their profession, and Sermon  
cannot fail to win the approbation of those that X.  
behold them. We see an apostle did not disdain  
to urge them: *Likewise ye younger, submit your* 1 Pet. v. 5.  
*selves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to*  
*another, and be clothed with humility; for God re-*  
*sisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*  
And in the same epistle he directs christians to be Chap. iii. 8.  
*courteous.*

4. He that orders his conversation aright, is  
*diligent and careful* in his business, and at the  
same time not miserable, *sordid*, and *greedy*.  
God, in his providence, orders the circumstan-  
ces of men, and appoints them their particular  
callings and imployments, wherein they may  
honour him and be useful in the world. God  
has not sent any man into the world, to live idly  
and unprofitably in it. And as he has assign'd  
men somewhat to do, so he expects they should  
be industrious in the doing it. And both the  
old testament and the new furnish us with va-  
rious precepts of this kind. And on the other  
hand, the apostle requires that our *conversation* Heb. xiii.  
*be without covetousness*; and nothing is more con- 5.  
trary to the spirit and design of christianity,  
than a worldly frame of mind. And as the la-  
ziness and prodigality of some, and the sordid  
covetousness of others, is highly blame-worthy;  
so the well temper'd diligence and frugality which  
the scripture prescribes, is a most excellent qua-  
lification in a christian. And the christian re-  
ligion is highly adorn'd, when the professors of  
it avoid the extreams on both hands, and keep  
the middle way between the spend-thrift and the  
miser: When they evidently shew they are not  
meerly designing themselves in their callings,  
but aim at the being useful and serviceable in  
their

Sermon their generation, and the doing as much good as they can in the world.

X.



Tit. ii. 12.

Mic. vi. 8.

5. A well-order'd conversation must be strictly *just* and *honest*. If we would live in the world according to the direction which the grace of God is design'd to give us, we must live *righteously*. *To do justly* is the first thing mention'd by the prophet, of the *good which God has shewn us*, and which he requires of us. And though the equity of a man's dealings is not enough to evidence he orders his conversation aright, yet the want of it, that is, knavish and fraudulent dealings, will infallibly demonstrate, that this character of ordering the conversation aright cannot belong to him. Such an one in all his dealings has an inviolable regard to the rules of justice and equity: He is just in his weights and measures, just in his accounts, his demands and payments, punctual to his trusts and engagements; and in a word gives to every one his due. This is reckon'd by our Saviour one of the *weightier* things of the law, a regard to which is most absolutely necessary.

Mat. xxiii.

23.

6. He that would order his conversation aright, must be *honourable* and *generous* in his dealings. If a man would converse so in the world, as to gain himself and his profession credit and reputation, he must act upon a principle of honour, scorning such little and mean artifices and shifts as are too common in the world; he must hate not only a base action, but any thing that may seem to be little and low: He must hate deceit, and approve himself by his conduct and behaviour to be such an one as our Saviour describes in speaking of *Nathanael, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*. A christian should be careful to *avoid* not only the things that are

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evil, but even *all appearance of evil*; not only those actions which cannot admit of any defence, but all too that will need any; even those, which though they may just bear a vindication, yet are so suspicious as will incur the censure of the world, and open the mouths of enemies against our holy religion. Sermon X.  
1 Thes. v. 22.

7. He that would order his conversation aright, must be *merciful* and *compassionate*. Though justice must take place, and is to go before mercy in many cases, because otherwise a man will shew mercy with what is other mens, and not his own; yet 'tis certainly not sufficient for a man to do justice, unless he loves mercy; and he must love it, and be inclin'd to it, even when 'tis not in the power of his hand to shew it as he would. There may be a charitable liberal temper where an ability to do much may be wanting; and in that case God accepts *according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not*. 2 Cor. viii. 12. And so strictly is this enjoyn'd in the scripture, that no man's conversation can be as becomes the gospel of Christ, who is a stranger to this disposition, and that does not shew an inclination and readiness to do good to his neighbour, and be helpful to him in offices of love and kindness; and particularly in relieving, according to his ability, such as are in need. And when justice and mercy are join'd together, and a righteous man appears to be indeed liberal and bountiful, his conversation cannot but gain the approbation of all that behold it; every one will be ready to attest that in such things 'tis certainly order'd aright.

8. A well-order'd conversation must be *exemplary for religion*: Piety should indeed run through the whole of it. His more common

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conver-

Sermon conversation should be such as may be good to  
 X. *the use of edifying*, and leave a favor of religion  
 in those with whom he converses ; it should  
 Eph. iv. *minister grace to the bearers.* 'Tis a reproach to  
 19. christians when religion is banish'd from their  
 discourse, and froth and levity fills up the whole  
 of it.

And then as to religious duties, the conversa-  
 tion cannot be order'd aright, where a person  
 does not make conscience of them : I speak of  
 those now which are not secret, and wherein  
 christians may be exemplary. He that has his  
 conversation by the grace of God, or according  
 to the rule of the gospel, must be exemplary in  
 his attendance upon, and his behaviour and de-  
 portment in the exercises of God's worship in the  
 family, and the publick assembly.

9. In order to a man's having this character,  
 it is necessary he should, in spite of all difficulties  
 and discouragements, be *constant* and *perseve-*  
*ring* in these things, even to the end of his life.  
 We are to consider this character as the condi-  
 tion of a promise ; and 'tis obvious from the  
 whole tenour of the scripture, that the promises  
 of God are made to such as hold on in their way.  
 Rom. ii. *To them who by patient continuance in well doing*  
 7. *seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will*  
 give eternal life. The threatening lies against such  
 2 Pet. ii. as *turn away from the path of righteousness, and*  
 20, 21. *from the holy commandment deliver'd unto them.* And  
 so far will men be from having any advantage  
 by their having once chosen the way of righte-  
 ousness, if they afterwards depart from it, that  
*it would have been better for them never to have*  
*known it, and the latter end will be worse with them*  
*than the beginning.*



So that this part of the character of a well-order'd conversation, must suppose a man to be patient in bearing the troubles and afflictions that would discourage him; and that he has such a degree of holy resolution and courage, as will carry him through all the difficulties that lie in his way; and that he retains his integrity to the end of his life.

Such now is the conversation God here speaks of; and a most excellent one it certainly is; and particularly upon the account of its being so much to the glory of God. This is a consideration which is suggested to us, by comparing this latter with the former clause of the verse. *Who so offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.* Our praise is never duely and acceptably offer'd as a sacrifice to God, when our conversations are not order'd aright: but when they are, then we glorify God.

I shall not enlarge upon this, because 'tis not in that part of the verse I propos'd to speak to; and therefore shall content my self with only hinting these three reasons, why such a conversation is so much for the glory of God.

1. This testifies a person's unfeigned subjection to God, when his whole conversation is thus order'd, according to the rule which God has given us to walk by. And this is a glorifying God, and a just occasion given to others to glorify him: whence the apostle speaks in that manner: *They glorify God for your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.* 2 Cor. ix. 13.

2. This manifests the power of divine grace in us, and so is to the glory of God. Such is the corruption and depravation of the heart of man, that there is a reluctance in it to the law

Sermon

X.



law of God, and a strong propension and inclination to the contrary course. And it must be owing to some noble principle, and to some excellent influence, that a person is brought to deny himself, to thwart his natural inclinations, and move against the stream and current of evil examples. And since all good men, who thus order their conversation aright, will acknowledge this to be owing to divine grace, the excellent power thereof does in their whole conduct become conspicuous to the honour and glory of God.

3. This is to the glory of God, because it does so excellently recommend the ways of religion, and conciliates the good opinion of others concerning it. There's somewhat so charming in a good conversation, that the apostle supposes persons might sometimes be *won by that alone without the word*, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. And our Saviour has taught us, that the letting our *light so shine before men, as that they may see our good works*, is the way to bring them to *glorify our father which is in heaven*.

Mat. v. 16.

And thus now I have spoken to the first part of my text, and explain'd to you the account or description which is here given of a good man; he is one that *orders his conversation aright*.

I am sensible how natural it is for you to expect, that I should now take occasion from what has been said, to draw the character of Mr. L——, our deceased friend. But as the drawing up of a character is really a nice and difficult work, if it be done with exactness, so I have been always ready to think my self not well qualify'd to undertake it. Besides, the extravagant flattery which has been practis'd upon these



these occasions, has often very much alter'd the Sermon  
design of such discourses, and has made them X.

to become panegyrics upon the dead, instead of  
warm and seasonable instructions to the living,  
as was their original intention. And since the  
honour of our function is concern'd, I hope to  
be excused if I seem to be in the other extream ;  
and am studious not only to avoid flattery, with  
which the commendations of the dead are not  
always to be charged, but likewise the very  
suspicion of it. And indeed in the present case,  
there is not much need for me to speak parti-  
cularly concerning the deceased ; since I am  
very confident, I should there say nothing but  
what every one, who knew his conversation, has  
already had in his thoughts, while I have gone  
over the heads of a well-order'd conversation.  
I had not chosen the text, if I had not thought  
it suited his case : And you have given him the  
greatest commendation your selves, if while I  
have been giving the description of a good man  
in general, you have not been able to avoid  
thinking of him, and applying in your own  
minds what has been said to his character. And  
since I am persuaded you have done this al-  
ready, any thing that I could now say would  
seem to be but flat and superfluous.

I come therefore to the other part of my  
text ;

II. To consider, and that but briefly, the end  
of the conversation of such ; that *to him that*  
*thus orders his conversation aright, shall be shewn*  
*the salvation of God.* And since God himself must  
be here understood as speaking, when 'tis said,  
*I will shew ;* and since he does not say, as it  
might seem natural enough, *my salvation*, but  
*the salvation of God ;* I take the expression ac-

Sermon according to the custom of that language, to denote

X. note in general *great or eminent salvation*. Now this salvation may be consider'd either as being temporal, or eternal.

1. To him that orders his conversation aright, God will shew *temporal salvation*; he will give such men deliverance from the dangers they are in: Which must be understood with some limitation, so far as 'tis for God's glory and their good. In this sense God is said to be *the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe*. And nothing is more ordinary in the scripture, and particularly the *Psalms*, than to speak of this under the title of salvation. And as the love God bears to such, so the care he takes of them is peculiar. The *Psalmist* had experience of it: *This poor man*, says he, meaning himself, *cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles*. And therefore he adds, *The angel of the Lord incampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them*. But,

1 Tim. iv.  
10.

Pf. xxxiv.  
6, 7.

2. Since the future judgment is the chief scope and subject of the Psalm, I can see no reason why we should not understand this to signify *eternal salvation*, that salvation that will be compleated for the people of God at the last judgment. And thus the expression, *I will shew him the salvation of God*, that is, that great salvation which is more fully described in the gospel, may denote two things.

1. That God would make him *understand*, and believingly *expect* it; and so in his present state grant him the comfort which such a hope does afford. I will shew him my salvation, make him perceive what a salvation it is, and that he himself is an heir of it. There is nothing in the world so comfortable as this: This will make

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life pleasant, and death easy ; but without it Sermon  
 life is a melancholy burden, and death an in- X.  
 supportable terror. But *the righteous only have* ~  
*this hope in their death. The eyes of the Lord are upon* Prov. xiv.  
*them for good,* they are the objects of his favour, 32.  
 upon them he lifts up the light of his counte-  
 nance, in their hearts he sheds abroad his love,  
 them he fills with joy and peace in believing,  
 making them to abound in hope through the  
 power of the Holy Ghost, and them he makes  
 to rejoyce in the hope of the glory to be re-  
 vealed. He shews them the way of salvation,  
 and satisfies them of their title to it ; so that  
 with quietness, peace, and satisfaction, they can  
 leave the world to go to obtain it.

2. He will shew them his salvation, that is,  
 will make them *partake* of it : Literally 'tis, *I*  
*will make him see the salvation of God.* And seeing  
 is put for possessing and injoying, and stands  
 in opposition to hoping, or expecting a thing,  
 according to that of the apostle : *For we are* Rom. viii.  
*saved by hope ; but hope that is seen is not hope : for* 24, 25.  
*what a man seeth* (that is, what he possesseth)  
*why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that*  
*we see not* (which a man does not yet injoy)  
*then do we with patience wait for it.*

And well may this be call'd the salvation of  
 God, or great salvation, whether you consider the  
 misery such are saved from, or the unspeakable  
 and everlasting happiness they are made to par-  
 take of. Inconceivable joys in the divine presence  
 are prepar'd for the entertainment of holy souls,  
 who, when they leave this world, shall be for  
 ever with the Lord ; and in his light shall see  
 light and life. There they shall be deliver'd  
 from sin, fatan, pains, weariness, and death ;  
 be introduced to the company of angels and

Sermon glorified saints, and be everlastingly join'd with  
 X. them in praising, serving, and injoying God.

But this happiness is too great to be spoken to in the limits of this discourse. I must refer you to what the scriptures say, and you have so often heard upon this subject: And will conclude with these three reflections upon what has been said.

Heb. ii.  
 15.

1. These things may be improved by good men as matter of comfort against the fears of death. The apostle speaks of men as being *thro' fear of death all their life time subject to bondage*. And there is nothing more enslaving and tormenting than that fear; nor can men be reasonably delivered from it, but only by a well-grounded and lively hope of a blessed immortality; a hope of seeing the salvation of God: But when men order their conversations aright, the promise of God is their security, that God will shew them his salvation. And when they have this hope, this expectation thus establish'd upon the truth and faithfulness of God, what should ever discourage them, or make them afraid? To them death has lost its sting, and through the death and resurrection of our Lord is made the way and passage to everlasting life and blessedness. 'Tis their gain, the end of their sorrows, and the beginning and in-let to their joys; and though the valley they pass thro' be dark, yet being secur'd of the divine presence, they need fear no evil; and the glimmering they have of the bright light that shines at the end of it, may make them lightsom and glad in their way through it. Now the order God has fix'd, and the promise he has made in the text, and many other places of the scripture, may well fill their souls with joy and rejoycing, even in the ap-



approaches of death. There is just matter of Sermon  
 rejoycing to good men when their consciences give X.  
 in this testimony, that in simplicity and godly since-  
 rity, not according to fleshly wisdom, but by the grace <sup>2 Cor. i.</sup>  
 of God, that is, according to the rule of the <sup>12.</sup>  
 gospel, they have had their conversations in the  
 world. If with the apostle we are ready to be <sup>2 Tim. iv.</sup>  
 offer'd up, and the time of our departure is at hand, <sup>6, 7, 8.</sup>  
 and we can say with him, we have fought a good  
 fight, we have finish'd our course, we have kept  
 the faith, we can have no reason to be discour-  
 aged and sunk in our spirits; so far from it,  
 that we may with him exceedingly rejoyce and  
 triumph: Henceforth there is laid up for us a crown  
 of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge  
 shall give us at that day; and not to us only, but to  
 all them that love his appearing.

The testimony a good conscience gives of our  
 past well-spent life, will imbolden us in our plea  
 for mercy from God, and give us good ground  
 with Hezekiah to say, Remember now, O Lord, I Isaiah  
 beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, <sup>xxxviii. 3.</sup>  
 and with a perfect heart, and have done that which  
 is good in thy sight. And such a confidence in  
 God, which good men may well have, may  
 disarm death of its terrors, and reconcile them  
 to, and even make them desirous of it; and in-  
 courage them to pray; Come, Lord Jesus, come  
 quickly.

2. This is just matter of support and comfort  
 when we part with our friends and relations,  
 whose conversations, we are satisfied, have been  
 order'd aright. God expects, indeed, we should  
 not be stupidly insensible under his rebukes, and  
 when he strips us of any of our comforts; but  
 when we sorrow for our christian friends, we are <sup>1 Thes. iv.</sup>  
 not to do it as those that are without hope. We <sup>13.</sup>  
 are

Sermon are to consider that our loss is their gain ; and

X. there is but little difference made by their going before us, if we are followers of their example ; for then we shall soon be with them, and enjoy their company, when it will be much better than we ever found it here in the world. Do

14. 1 Thes. iv. *we believe that as Jesus died, and rose again, so then them also which sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him ?* Do we believe that our friends did the work of God here in the world, that they have well finish'd their course, and that they rest from their labours, temptations, and sorrows, and are with Christ in a state of joy and blessedness ; and that *when he shall appear, they shall be in his retinue, and appear with him in glory ?* Let us not then repine at their enjoying the happiness we profess to hope for, and to be seeking our selves ; but while we are troubled for the want of their presence and conversation, let us not forget to bless God for the happiness we had in them, and the good satisfaction he has given us in parting with them. When we part with relations, concerning whom we have no such hope, we must be *dumb with silence, because God has done it* : But we have special reason to be thankful to God, when he removes and takes away pious useful relations and friends ; we have reason, I say, to be thankful to God who first gave them, and who has left us such a comfortable hope concerning them, when he took them away. And therefore we should say with Job :

Job i. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

3. This should be a very strong and powerful motive to us, to make it our indeavour to order our conversations aright. Who is there

Pf. xxxvii. *that marks the perfect man, and that beholds the upright,*



upright, and that considers that *the end of such an* Sermon  
*one is peace,* even everlasting peace and blessed- X.  
 ness, that is not ready to say with *Balaam*; *Let*  
*me dye the death of the righteous, and let my last* Numb.  
*end be like his?* And how common are such idle xxiii. 10.  
 and lazy wishes as these! How frequently do  
 we hear of mens desire of this when they come to  
 leave the world! But there's no promise of God  
 that gives encouragement to men to hope for  
 any such thing, if their life is not the life of  
 the righteous, if they make it not their care to  
 order their conversations aright, as righteous  
 men do. While this is neglected, your *own*  
*heart cannot but condemn you; and God is greater* 1 John iii.  
*than your heart, and will much more condemn* 20.  
 you. You are liable every moment to be seized  
 by death. God may give you none, or a very  
 short warning. You may lie down well in your  
 beds, without the least thought or expectation  
 of a change, when yet the decree may be pass'd,  
*This night shall thy soul be required of thee.* And Luke xii.  
 then if thou art unprovided, the folly and mis- 20.  
 chief of thy neglect will be irreparable. And  
 how dismal must it be, to have all the guilt of a  
 vicious conversation, of an ill spent life, to fol-  
 low thee into the eternal world, to exclude thee  
 from beholding the salvation of God, and to  
 plunge thee into the damnation and torment of  
 devils? How uncomfortable must thy sick bed  
 thoughts be, if when thou lookest back, thy  
 neglects of God, thy duty and thy salvation,  
 and a multitude of horrid enormities committed  
 by thee, stare thee in the face; and conscience  
 then sets thy sins in order before thee, and racks  
 thee in the remembrance of them; and when  
 thou lookest forward, thou art forced to behold  
 the angry countenance of a provoked and terrible  
 God,

Sermon God, to see the door of mercy shut against thee :

X. the tempter ready to seize and hurry away thy soul, and the infernal pit gaping to receive it ?

What a torment must this be to thy friends, when they are forced to see thee going down to destruction, and cannot help thee ? And what a horror, if thou hast any sense, must this produce in thy own soul ? and how much worse will it still be, when the blow is given ; the thing thou darest falls upon thee, and thy unready soul is removed to the other world ? *Psal. l. 22.* O then be wise in time ; consider the good examples that have been set you, *whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* Let it now

Heb. xiii. be the care of every one of you to order your conversation aright. Then may'st thou spend thy life in a blessed tranquility ; and as *Solomon* says,

Eccl. ix. 7. Thou may'st go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God accepteth thy works. This will make thy friends easy and comfortable, as having hope in thy death : It will make thee lift up thy head with joy in the approaches of it, as knowing that thy redemption draweth nigh ; and it will secure thee an everlasting blessedness after death. For God has said, *To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.*

The



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*The surprising Condescension of God in  
dwelling with Men upon Earth.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd on

CHRISTMAS-DAY, 1716.

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2 CHRON. VI. 18.

*But will GOD in very deed dwell  
with Men on Earth?*

**T**HE incarnation of our Lord Jesus Sermon  
XI.  
Christ, is a subject which should never be thought on by us without wonder and astonishment. Herein the counsels of heaven began to be put in execution; and this was the first opening of that bright and glorious scene of redeeming love and grace, which is the ground of all our hope and comfort. The appearance of our blessed Lord in the world, the manner in which he behaved himself while he was in it, and the way he has taken to bring about our salvation, are subjects of that importance to christians, and require so much

Sermon much of their application and diligence to greater

XI. their thoughts of them ; that it has pleased God  
 to appoint one day in the week to be especially  
 imploy'd in a thankful meditation upon them.  
 He that duly regards God's institution, and  
 keeps up the weekly remembrance of these be-  
 nefits, will not need the help of an anniversary  
 festival of man's devising, to put him in mind  
 of our Saviour's incarnation.

But inveterate customs, however groundless  
 they may be, are not easily broken : And there-  
 fore here christians ought (as one would think,  
 without any great difficulty they may be able)  
 to bear with one another's differing sentiments  
 and practices, without envying, or grievously  
 censuring the liberty which is used on both  
 sides. *As he that regards not the day, regards it  
 not to the Lord ; so he that regardeth it, let him  
 to the Lord regard it.* 'Tis highly unreasonable  
 on either hand, that such as esteem themselves  
 free, should use their liberty as a cloak of maliciou-  
 sness. As God has called us to liberty, so it should  
 be our care not to use our liberty for an occasion to  
 the flesh, but by love to serve one another.

1 Pet. ii.  
 16.

Gal. v. 13.

If men pay a religious deference to this time  
 of the year, and are more pleased with it upon  
 a sacred account, than for the ordinary licenci-  
 ousness of it ; let them then exercise themselves  
 agreeably, in seriously remembring what they  
 profess to be the reason of their observing it :  
 And then this text will afford them somewhat  
 very serious upon that subject, which is of too  
 great importance to be ever unsuitable to any  
 of us.

The words are Solomon's at the dedication of  
 the temple. He had by God's special appoint-  
 ment built it for the place of God's abode, as  
 he



he says; *I have built an house of habitation,* Sermon  
*and a place for thy dwelling for ever.* And now, XI.  
when in his prayer to God, he consider'd for  
what use God had warranted him to build this ver. 2.

house, that it was to be his dwelling place, he  
breaks out into this admiration in the text :  
*But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth ?*  
Which words are not to be taken to express any  
doubtfulness or unbelief of the matter in *Solomon*,  
but to declare the admiration and joy that  
possess'd his soul, when he thought of this great  
vouchsafement, *q. d.* " Matchless goodness !  
" Astonishing condescension ! Who could have  
" ever had such a thought enter into his mind,  
" and much more who could have ever ex-  
" pected the thing it self, that God should  
" dwell with men on earth, had not he himself  
" first assured us of it, and given express order  
" to prepare a place for it ?

The words therefore will yield us this general proposition : That 'tis a most affecting and surprising thing, that God should dwell with men on earth.

This I shall consider,

- I. With relation to the temple which *Solomon* built, and which he may be thought to have had most clearly in view, when he utter'd these words ;
- II. With relation to what was typified by the temple, and which 'tis not unreasonable to suppose *Solomon* had some, though a less distinct, notion of, and so might have here some regard to ; and that is the temple of our Lord's body, when *the word was made flesh, and dwelt with us* here on earth.

I. 'Tis

Sermon I. 'Tis an astonishing thing, and should very  
 XI. much affect our minds, that God should dwell  
 with men on earth, in such a way as he dwelt  
 in that temple which Solomon built. The last  
 part of the verse gives us the reason why this  
 is so astonishing: *Behold, heaven, and the heaven  
 of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this  
 house which I have built?* This leads us likewise  
 to the true notion we are to form of God's  
 dwelling in any place. If we consider his omni-  
 presence, that *in him we live, and move, and have  
 our being*; that he fills the heaven and the earth  
 with his presence, and that the created universe  
 is too narrow to set limits to his being; 'tis  
 plain, in this respect, he can't be said to dwell  
 more in one place than in another. He can't  
 be contain'd in any one place, because 'tis im-  
 possible he should be excluded from any: But  
 he is said to dwell where he affords sensible and  
 illustrious tokens of his presence. These seem  
 to have been given immediately by the λόγος,  
 the Son of God, according to the ordinary way  
 wherein God works. And he that afterwards  
 dwelt in our flesh, seems to have been the per-  
 son, who of old was peculiarly present in the  
 tabernacle and temple; and upon other occasi-  
 ons wherein God is said to have appear'd to men.  
 He dwelt then between the *Cherubim*; but it  
 was, as Solomon says, *in the thick darkness*, i. e.  
 Lev. xvi. 2. *in the cloud upon the mercy-seat*. There he pecu-  
 liarly was, and accepted his peoples service; and  
 the cloud was a symbol of the glorious presence  
 of him, whom it was not lawful for any of the  
 people, or of the priests to behold; no, not the  
 high-priest himself, when he once a year went  
 into the holy of holies. And therefore he was  
 com-



commanded to burn incense when he went in; Sermon  
that the smoke of it might prevent his sight of **XI.**  
that glorious person who dwelt there. *And he*  
*shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from* <sup>Lev. xvi.</sup>  
*off the Altar before the LORD, and his hands full* <sup>12, 13.</sup>  
*of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within*  
*the vail. And he shall put the incense upon the fire*  
*before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may*  
*cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that*  
*he die not.* That is, say the Jewish writers,  
"To the end that he might not behold the <sup>Ain sws</sup>  
"majesty of God, as 'tis written, *No man shall* <sup>in loc.</sup>  
"see me and live, 'twas necessary that he should  
"first darken the house with incense: And this  
made them anciently so ready to look upon  
themselves as dead men, when they had been  
favour'd with an eminent manifestation of the <sup>Judg. xiii.</sup>  
divine glory. <sup>22.</sup>

Now to evidence to you, that God's dwelling <sup>Isa. vi. 5.</sup>  
in such a manner with men on earth; is a just  
cause for the most joyful amazement; let me  
take notice of these following things:

1. That hereby a very great honour is done  
to Men. When the apostle is setting forth the  
great advantages and privileges of the Jews,  
above all other people, he takes particular notice  
of this among the rest, that to them belong'd <sup>Rom. ix.</sup>  
*the glory.* And the residence of the divine glory among  
that people was without doubt a signal honour  
and glory to them. And they had good reason to  
magnify their privilege, and to boast of the ho-  
nour done them; that they had the temple of God  
among them. We reckon it an honour, when  
one, very much our superior, will condescend  
to make us a visit, and take up with such accom-  
modations as we are able to give him. And  
how inconceivably great then must the honour  
U be

Sermon be which is done to any people on the earth,  
 XI. when the glorious God will vouchsafe to visit,  
 to dwell, to fix his habitation and abode with  
 them ! Must it not be very strange, that the  
 supream Lord should shew such a regard to the  
 sons of men ?

2. The friendship which is hereby express'd  
 is most advantageous. We are not to look upon  
 this as a bare, empty, and useless honour. If  
 it be duly consider'd, it must appear an invaluable  
 benefit : For what can we think that all  
 this condescension in him, and all the great pre-  
 parations which he appoints to be made of an  
 house and habitation for him can be for ; but that  
 he may be nigh to his people in a peculiar man-  
 ner, nigh to them in all they call upon him  
 for ; nigh to them to receive their services, to  
 accept their offerings, to answer their prayers,  
 and give forth to them a supply of all their  
 wants ?

And to this purpose we have many expressi-  
 ons concerning God's house under the law. *This*  
*Exod. xxix. 42, shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your ge-*  
*43. neration at the door of the tabernacle of the congre-*  
*gation, before the LORD : where I will meet with*  
*you to speak there unto thee. And there will I meet*  
*Chap. xxx. 6. with the children of Israel. And again : Thou shalt*  
*put it before the vail, that is by the ark of the testi-*  
*mony ; before the mercy-seat that is over the testi-*  
*mony, where I will meet with thee.*

Can any friendship, any intercourse or com-  
 munion be more advantageous to men on earth,  
 than what God is pleas'd to afford them with  
 himself ? Well then might it affect king *Solomon*,  
 when he consider'd for what God was pleas'd  
 to take up his residence with men on earth, and  
 how great advantages would certainly redound to  
 them thereby.

3. The



3. The circumstances of men here on earth, Sermon  
render it the more amazing that God should XI.  
come and dwell with them. As we can't raise  
our thoughts high enough when we think of  
God, so we can hardly think contemptibly  
enough of our selves, when we compare our  
selves with him. If we look to our original for-  
mation, and consider the matter of which we  
are composed; may we not thence learn to en-  
tertain a low opinion of our selves? How little  
do we value the dust under our feet? And yet  
of that were we made, as in a little time will be  
sufficiently demonstrated, when we come to be  
resolved into our first principles; and the dust  
that was taken from the earth, returns to the  
earth, and becomes dust again. See how affected  
*Abraham* was with this thought: He could not  
but look upon it as a kind of presumption for  
him to speak unto God, when he consider'd  
what he himself was, *dust and ashes*. He appre-  
hended the great God might resent his interpo-  
sing in the behalf of *Sodom* as a daring affront,  
and therefore he uses that caution: *Behold now I* Gen. xviii.  
*have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am* 27, 30.  
*but dust and ashes*. And again, *O let not the Lord*  
*be angry, and I will speak*. And if our circum-  
stances, as such weak, mean, and frail creatures,  
bespeak it a condescension in God to suffer us to  
speak to him, much more must it be thought  
a condescension in him to suffer such to build  
a place for his abode, and then to vouch-  
safe to abide and dwell in it, that he may be  
near to us to do us good. And we may especi-  
ally thus conceive of this matter, when we re-  
member how much sin has deprest us below our  
first original. Though we were made of the  
dust of the earth, yet by reason of that noble

Sermon and immortal spirit which was immediately  
 XI. breathed into us by God, we were the top of  
 this lower creation. But sin has made us more

vile than the beasts that perish. This has over-  
 spread our nature, marr'd the workmanship of  
 God, and render'd us most wretchedly unfit for  
 so pure and holy a God to converse with. This  
 therefore renders the thing yet the more asto-  
 nishing. However mean the matter of our com-  
 position at first was, yet we were his own crea-  
 tures, and his wisdom and power were gloriously  
 display'd in forming the vile dust so curiously;  
 and making of it creatures capable of such ex-  
 cellent and noble purposes. And it could not  
 be any real disparagement for him to shew a  
 kind regard to creatures, which it was not below  
 his wisdom to produce. But now for him to be  
 willing to take up his abode with those who  
 have so vitiated themselves, and lost the great  
 excellency and glory of their nature; for him to  
 accept of a dwelling place of their preparing,  
 and to come and set his glory in the midst of  
 them, and to converse with them in a gracious  
 manner; this may well be marvellous in our eyes.

4. His condescension must be herein very ad-  
 mirable, seeing he is infinitely above the want  
 of any thing of this nature upon his own account.  
 What need do we think he that form'd all  
 things, that laid the foundations of the earth,  
 and stretched out the heavens as a curtain, that  
 has made this vast fabric, whose greatness sur-  
 passes our conception, and the proportion and  
 harmony of all whose parts and motions is ex-  
 quisite; what need, I say, can he have of any  
 house of man's erecting for him to dwell in?  
 Can he want a place of abode, who was before  
 the mountains were brought forth, before the  
 earth

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earth and the world were form'd, who was Sermon  
from everlasting, and is to everlasting God? XI.

If he needed such an habitation, where do we think he was before he made all these things? How nobly does the apostle argue this matter? *God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with mens hands, as tho' he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* Acts xvii. 24, 25. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he can't need any earthly temple to dwell in: And seeing he gives to all men whatever they have, he can't be in want of any thing they can give or make for him.

And as the apostle speaks here concerning his house, so God himself elsewhere speaks concerning the table he kept in it, or the meat of his house, that is, the sacrifices offer'd there upon his altar; shewing that he receiv'd not these things as tho' he had any real want of them. *Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Psal. l. 10, &c. And since God is so transcendently above any want of these things, his accepting them must be an act of pure goodness, which may well appear most admirable, when we consider to whom 'tis shown.

5. God's dwelling thus with men on earth is the more admirable, because the most stately building that can be erected by men on earth, is so vastly below the greatness and magnificence of his majesty. A temple is consider'd as the house of God, as his palace, and the place of his residence and abode. Now a palace should be

Sermon answerable to the magnificence of the prince that

XI. inhabits it. A low and mean cottage, a narrow and contemptible structure, would be reckon'd a disparagement to a great monarch. And all ages testify, that such are ambitious of shewing their magnificence by the stateliness of their palaces, and apt to pride themselves therein.

Dan. iv.

39, 30.

Thus *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he was walking, and strutting in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, he spake and said: *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?*

And as the temple which *Solomon* built was to be the house of God, so it was built with the utmost magnificence upon the account of the greatness of that God for whom 'twas built.

2 Chron.

41, 5, 6.

*The house*, says he, *which I build is great; for our God is great above all Gods. But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain him? Who am I then that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?*

In which words he alleges the greatness of God, as a reason for the greatness of the temple to be built for him; and at the same time owns that the temple he should build, however magnificent it should be, would yet by no means be answerable to his greatness: That though it was to be indeed God's house, yet it was not so properly for his use as for his people's, that they might offer sacrifices before him.

And though that temple was the most magnificent in the whole world; yet what a small, inconsiderable spot did it stand upon, in comparison of the whole earth? and what is even that to the place of God's abode?

Is. lxvi.

1, 2.

*Thus saith the Lord: The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house ye build unto me? and where is*

*the*



*the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made, and all these things have been.* For the great God then to take up his residence in an earthly temple, and to dwell with men on earth, is like the condescension of a prince (to use the allusion there) who should come down from his throne, to sit familiarly with his subjects upon the lowest part of his footstool. And this fill'd *Solomon* with wonder, that so great a God should yet vouchsafe to dwell with men on earth. Therefore he speaks of it in this manner: *But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?*

And thus I have shewn you how astonishing 'tis, that God should dwell with men on earth, in such a manner as he once dwelt in the *Jewish* tabernacle and temple. Give me leave, before I pass to the other part of my discourse, to make this one remark upon what has been said, viz. That God's dwelling on earth is certainly not so light a matter as some men would make of it: I mean those who would pretend to assure us of God's dwelling in all the temples they are pleas'd to build and to consecrate; and to allege, I know not what *Shechinah*, or glory, that is at their altars, as a reason why men should bow toward them. What warrant have they for this? *David* and *Solomon* would not venture upon building an habitation for the great God, without his special appointment.

The building of places of worship is certainly very commendable, and this among the *Jews* any one might do, who could go to the cost. But there was a vast difference between their synagogues and the temple. There was no divine

Sermon *Shechinah*, or glory in the synagogues ; nay, nor

XI. in the second temple, when they had lost the ark of the testimony. We have no order for setting apart places now for any such purpose ; we have no promise of God's dwelling peculiarly in them, nor is there any evidence or sign of his doing so. The only temple God has ever had among the Gentiles is his church and people ; in them, and not in any houses made with hands, does he now dwell. The very notion these men have is superstitious ; but the practice they build upon it, when upon this ground they direct their worship toward a particular place, as though a divine glory resided there, I take to be much worse ; and is such an evil as I am sorry it should be found among christians, and especially among protestants.

II. I come now to shew you, that 'tis a most affecting and surprising thing, that God should dwell with men on earth in that manner in which he did at the incarnation of our blessed Lord, when the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And as the tabernacle and temple of old were typical of his tabernacling among us, and of the temple of his body ; so 'tis not unreasonable to suppose *Solomon* might have some imperfect notion of this matter, and some regard to it in the uttering these words, *Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth ?*

'Tis indeed very natural, when we think of God's dwelling by his Son in the temple of *Jerusalem*, to make a transiſion in our thoughts to his dwelling in our nature. Our Saviour himself has taught us to do so, by his taking occasion from the temple, when he was in it, to speak of the temple of his body. *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up : But he*

John ii.  
19, 21.

spake.



*spoke of the temple of his body.* And if it was so Sermon  
surprising a thing that he should dwell in an XI.  
earthly temple, much more is it surprising he  
should dwell in flesh. This I shall now make  
out by these following considerations.

I. An unspeakably greater honour is done us  
by the incarnation of the Son of God, than by  
his dwelling in any earthly temple. 'Tis a  
vastly different, and a much greater thing for  
the Son of God to become man, by taking our  
nature upon him, than it was for him to dwell  
in that manner he did for a time among the  
*Jews* in an earthly temple. 'Tis reckon'd a  
greater honour to a corporation, when a prince  
accepts of his freedom among them, whereby  
he makes himself one of them, than 'tis for him  
barely to stay a little while among them. And  
indeed the highest honour has been done to our  
nature by the Son of God's assuming it into  
so close an union with himself. It was an ho-  
nour to it, that he was pleas'd of old to appear  
in the form and resemblance of a man, as it  
seems reasonable to think he did upon several  
occasions mention'd in the old testament; and  
might, for ought we know, in some such manner  
inhabit the tabernacle and first temple. But  
still that was not our flesh, that was not our  
nature: But this he actually assum'd at his in-  
carnation. Of what higher advancement was  
our nature capable than this which is now con-  
fer'd upon it? The angelic order *desire to look into*  
*these things*, and behold, with admiration, our  
nature promoted to a dignity, which their own  
is a stranger to. *For verily he took not upon him*  
*the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and*  
*because the children were partakers of flesh and blood,*  
*he likewise himself took part of the same.*

# 298 The surprising Condescension of God

Sermon Further, his assuming our nature was not a

XI. short temporary business: He still retains it in the nearest union with himself, and has made it partake of all his present advancement and glory. He has carried it with him into heaven, and there in it sits at the right hand of God, crown'd with dignity and honour, having all power both in heaven and earth confer'd upon him: So that our nature could not be more honour'd by being assum'd by a more honourable person, or by being more highly advanc'd and exalted. And well may we say, who are we, or what is our father's house, that we should be thus dealt with, and highly honour'd? And if *Elizabeth* was so affected at the coming of his mother, when she cried out, *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Much more may we cry out with admiration; whence is it that our Lord himself should in this manner come to us, and in this manner take us to himself; take our nature to a participation in his glory?

Luke i. 43.

2. He is by this means come much nearer to us than he ever was before. Whatever the glory was in which he dwelt of old in the temple, it was not accommodated to a mortal eye. *The glory of the LORD filled the house; and the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.*

2 Chron. vii. 1, 2.  
1 King. viii. 10, 11.

And the like was the case at the setting up the tabernacle. The splendor and glory of the divine presence was too strong for *Moses* himself to behold. *Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the*

Exod. xl. 34, 35.

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*in dwelling with Men upon Earth.* 399

*the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD* Sermon  
*filled the tabernacle.* But how different was the **XI.**  
case at his incarnation? Then *the word was*  
*made flesh, and tabernacled with us (and we beheld* John i. 14.  
*his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Fa-*  
*ther) full of grace and truth.* Then he that was  
the brightness of his Father's glory, and the ex-  
press image of his person, was in the fullest man-  
ner reveal'd; and the Father in and by him;  
so that he that saw the Son, saw the Father  
also.

And not only was he brought nearer to our  
view, but he became more nearly allied and re-  
lated to us. He has taken our nature into an  
union with himself, has taken part with us in  
our flesh and blood, and has been, as we all are,  
born of a woman: And by thus becoming man  
he stands in a near relation to us, and is not  
now asham'd to call us brethren. And is it not  
an amazing thing, that the king of glory should  
condescend to be thus related to us, that by such  
a method he and we should become brethren;  
that he by becoming the son of man, should  
be a brother to men, that they by virtue of  
their relation to him might again be related to  
God, and as brethren be the children of the  
same father, have his Father for their Father,  
and his God for their God?

3. His dwelling in this manner with men on  
earth is the more affecting and surprising, up-  
on the account of the lowness of that condition  
into which he put himself at his incarnation.  
He is the king of glory, and had a glory with  
the Father before the world was. And when he  
dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, he by no  
means divested himself of his glory. He resided  
there with a majesty and glory suitable to his  
nature,

Sermon nature, and too great for men to behold or bear

XI. the presence of. Here was a condescension indeed, in dealing so kindly with men ; but there was no condescension in obscuring and vailing his glory. The majesty and glory of his presence then was awful to all that were near the place of it. But how amazingly different was his condition when he came into the world ! He had then indeed the glory of the only begotten of the father ; but not in a sensible and conspicuous manner, not so as to affect a bodily eye. He had thus no form nor comeliness to raise the wonder, or attract the desire of those that beheld him. He that was in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant ; became subject to the government of parents and magistrates. He was made like to us in all the sinless frailties and infirmities which the human nature, ever since the fall, has been subject to. He led a life as we do, expos'd to danger and trouble ; was a weak infant ; persecuted that he might be destroy'd ; upon his first coming into the world ; was all along a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; encounter'd the temptations of the devil ; indur'd the contradiction of sinners, being reviled, abased, derided, buffeted, scourg'd, spit upon, and crucified by men. And can any thing be more astonishing than this ?

Well may we call the universe to observe and wonder at this. Hear, Oh heavens, and give ear, Oh earth : The creator, he by whom God made the worlds, has become an infant ; and he that made all things has been made of a woman : He that gives life to all, has condescended to receive life by the means of such to whom he gave it. The Son of the blessed, that was most blessed in the bosom of the Father, has

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has indur'd the sharpest affliction, and most bitter curse ; and the Lord of life has died an ignominious and painful death, even the death of the cross. And would he ever thus *in very deed dwell with men on earth?* has he actually now done it ; and have we not reason, with *Solomon*, to be astonish'd at the thoughts of it ?

4. His dwelling thus with men on earth is the more marvellous, if we consider the design of it. For what end did he come into the world, and live in it, was he tempted, did he suffer, bleed and die, but for our advantage ? What an affection to, and tenderness for us has he acquir'd by taking our nature, experiencing our troubles and temptations ? How mercifully is he now inclin'd to succour us in all our difficulties ? What a clear revelation has he given us of the divine law, and what an example has he set us of obedience, patience, and submission to the divine will ? And what a perfect expiation and atonement has he made for our sins ? This was the end of his appearance. *We know he was manifested to take away our sins.* Astonishing grace ! His condescension is our exaltation ; his abasement our glory ; his sorrows are our comforts ; his grief our joy ; his wounds are our healing, and his death our life. He humbles himself to dwell with men on earth, to open a way for their advancement to dwell with him in heaven.

5. That which heightens the wonder of all is, that these methods are pursued, and these transactions set on foot for the benefit of such rebels and enemies as men here on earth are. For them that had forfeited his favour, and deserv'd his vengeance ; for them that would so unkindly receive him ; for them at whose hands he was

to

Sermon  
XI.

## 302 *The surprising Condescension of God*

Sermon to undergo his grievous sorrows ; for them, I

XI. say, and their benefit, he came to dwell here on earth : Them he came to serve, by whom he was so greatly to suffer. And if *Solomon* had reason to speak with so much wonder of God's dwelling with men on earth, in an earthly temple, much more reason have we to speak with wonder of his thus dwelling with us in our nature. This is indeed the Lord's doings, condescension and goodness too great for any heart but his ; and therefore 'tis marvellous in our eyes.

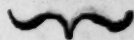
I shall now conclude with some reflections upon what has been said.

1. Hence we may see how great an evil sin is, and how difficult and important a work it is to save sinners. Had sin been as light and trivial a matter as foolish sinners are apt to make of it, there would have been no need of such an amazing abasement of the Son of God to take it away. Were other offerings and sacrifices of no value for this end, was such a sacrifice requisite in our case ; was it expedient that no less a person than the blessed Son of God should be made flesh, made a curse and a sacrifice for us, in order to his atoning for it ; and must it not then be a most hateful and abominable evil ? And were the salvation of such as have been guilty of it, an easy thing to be accomplish'd, doubtless it had been effected without putting so glorious a person as he was to the greatest shame and pain. But the difficulties of the work requir'd such an undertaker ; and the deplorable-ness of our case call'd for the help of one who was mighty to save.

2. Hence we may see the great obligations we are under to our redeemer. How earnestly desirous does he appear to have been of our welfare,

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welfare, since he stuck at no abasement, no trouble or grief in order to his procuring it. What greater evidence could he give us of his affection, than he has done by his being willing to vail his glory, to put himself into such a low condition, and live such a sorrowful life here in a most miserable world; and at last, die the most ignominious and accursed death of the cross for us? Is it an amazing thing, that such a person should dwell with men on earth, and shall we not esteem it the most marvellous demonstration of his love? What could he have done more for us than he has done? Or how could he come nearer, or be more strictly allied to us, than by taking upon him our nature, and dwelling in our flesh?

3. The more astonishing his condescension is in dwelling with men on earth, the more should our remembrance of it excite us to bless and glorify God. Thus were the angels imploy'd at his coming into the world. *And suddenly there* Luke ii. *was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host* 13, 14. *praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men; and yet he came not to dwell with them, but with men on earth. Shall not we therefore look upon our selves under more peculiar obligations to bless and magnify the name of our God upon this account? This should be frequently our business: Christ should be the most constant subject of every christian's praise and thanksgiving. And as this should run through all our service, so particularly should it now be the employment of those who would observe an annual remembrance of it. This would be to observe it to the Lord, and should be no matter of offence to any, provided it were done with charity, and with-*

Sermon without intrenching upon our christian liberty.

XI. But if men only make this an occasion to the flesh, to be the more loose and profligate, you may be assur'd the amazing condescension of Christ in dwelling with men on earth will never justify or excuse them. Christ was *manifested to destroy the works of the devil*; they therefore deal very injuriously by him who commemorate his birth, as though he came to be the *minister of sin*.

4. Let us hence learn to be more careful not to debase our nature which the Son of God has so highly honour'd and dignified by taking it upon himself. Has he set such a value upon it, and so gloriously exalted it; let not us undervalue and disparage it. We can boast of an honour confer'd upon our nature, that never was upon the angelical; and shall we, notwithstanding, prostitute it, as tho' it were no better than that of the beasts that perish? As the vision said to *Peter*, *What God has cleansed, that call not thou common*; so say I to you, what God has honour'd, make not thou vile. Is that nature which the Son of God has honour'd with so intimate an union to himself, fit to be abused by intemperance and excess? Is it fit to be dishonour'd and defiled by impure and sensual lusts? He by taking our nature is become one with us, and we are now to consider our selves as under peculiar obligations to be his. Now, as the apostle says, *the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*. Let us then remember we are under peculiar obligations to honour our redeemer with that nature, which he has himself so highly honour'd.

1 Cor. vi.  
13.

5. Since he has come and dwelt with men on earth, let us make him our pattern: Since he

has



has born our nature, we may be assur'd from Sermon  
his wisdom, his perfect and spotless purity, that XI.  
his example must be the most exact and noble  
that was ever given in it. Most worthy there-  
fore is he of our imitation, and we ought to  
walk, as he also walked; the same mind should  
be in us that was in him; and as he was, so  
should we be in the world.

6. Has he testified his willingness to come  
and dwell with us, let us be earnestly desirous  
of dwelling with him. 'Tis disingenuous for us  
to be shy or indifferent, when one so transcen-  
dently above us shews a desire of being near to  
us. Shall we affect a distance from him, who  
came down from heaven to dwell upon this mise-  
rable earth, that he might be near us? Is it  
not both our honour and our happiness that he  
will dwell with us, and suffer us to dwell with  
him? Let us then shew our selves pleas'd with  
his gracious condescension, by endeavouring to  
promote this cohabitation he is so desirous of.

1. Let us cultivate that principle which is  
most subservient hereto. The apostle speaks  
of *Christ's dwelling in our hearts by faith*: The Eph. iii.  
more we live by faith, the more shall we expe-<sup>17</sup>  
rience of his presence and influences.

2. Let us cherish the motions of his holy spi-  
rit, by whom he fulfils his promise of being with  
his people alway, to the end of the world. By  
him he dwells in us, whence we are stiled the  
temples of the Holy-Ghost. *Grieve not therefore  
his good spirit*; but endeavour readily to follow  
his conduct, and to do the things that are plea-  
sing to him.

3. Let us earnestly desire and endeavour, that  
we may dwell with him for ever. This was his  
great design in coming down to dwell with us

Sermon on earth, to raise us up to dwell with him in

XI. heaven; and thither he is return'd to *prepare a place for you, that where he is you may be also.* Let your minds then continually ascend to him, and seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Count the being with him in those mansions in his Father's house, and the beholding his glory, to be far better than all the comforts of a sensual life here on earth. And therefore give all diligence to practise every virtue, and discharge every duty, that so you may be admitted to a blissful abode with him who came down to dwell with you on earth; and that you may have *an entrance ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

2 Pet. i.  
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*The Nature and Design of Christ's Com-  
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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd

MAY 8, 1718.

Before the

A S S E M B L Y

At the

MORNING-LECTURE.

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MATT. xxviii. 20. (former part.)

*Teaching them to observe all things, what-  
soever I have commanded you.*

**T**HERE is hardly any thing which Sermon  
men more eagerly covet than power ; XII.  
and it cannot seem strange if that  
often does, as it happens very re-  
markably in our time, become the occasion of  
much contest. And as 'tis a presumption for  
X 2 men

Sermon men to assume a power which does not belong  
 XII. to them, and invade the liberties of their neighbours ; so our submission to such a power, when 'tis of any considerable consequence, is a mean and base betraying of our right ; and when 'tis in the affair of religion, is inexcusable, because 'tis inconsistent with the allegiance, which as christians we owe to our great Lord. In this case, the surest method of trying men's pretences, is to have recourse to the commission from whence their authority is deriv'd.

For this end I have chosen these words as the subject of my discourse, because in them our Lord gave his apostles their commission ; which I freely own extended not only to them, but to all who were to succeed them in their office to the end of the world. For as the promise in the latter part of the verse, reaches so far (and 'tis a poor criticism that is alleg'd to the contrary) so it plainly supposes them (that is them and their successors) to continue to the end of the world. 'Tis therefore very proper to examine what this commission does extend to.

The words then acquaint us with these two things, which in my discourse I shall accordingly consider.

- I. The general nature of that authority or power with which Christ has intrusted his ministers. 'Tis an authority to teach men.
- II. The particular matter in which they were to exercise this power or authority, or what they were to teach men ; and that is, *to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them.*



I. The general nature of that authority with which Christ has intrusted his ministers ; 'tis an authority to *teach* men. When our Saviour sent his apostles into the world to preach the gospel, he knew how strong the prejudices were which men had conceived in favour of the religions they profess'd, and how difficult 'twould be to remove them ; yet he design'd not they should spread his doctrine and advance his kingdom by the help of any carnal weapons, or by any other force than that which was proper, in its own nature, to work upon the reason and consciences of men. Their business therefore was to *manifest the truth* where they came, and by doing that, to *approve themselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God*. There is a considerable difference between those first teachers, who were immediately sent forth by Christ himself, and those who come after them. Though the subject matter of the teaching of both be the same, as we shall see when we come to the other part of our discourse ; yet the vast superiority of gifts and advantages which the first ministers of Christ's kingdom had, must necessarily bespeak them to have had an higher degree of authority. This difference will easily appear, while I explain the way in which Christ's ministers were to teach men ; which I shall do in these following particulars ;

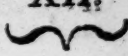
1. They were to *publish* and *attest* the truth of God, and the way of salvation by Christ, unto the world. This is the business of all those who are imploy'd as the ministers of Christ. We, indeed, can only publish it as receiving it from them, and must appeal to that testimony which they gave, or rather which God gave by

Sermon XII. them of the truth of it. But the apostles were empower'd in a singular and extraordinary manner to deliver these things unto the world. Many of the things which are to be publish'd by the preachers of the gospel, are matters of fact, as the preaching, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ: And these they could bear witness to, as we who come after them cannot; because we are not, as they were, the eye-witnesses of them.

Besides, they had extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit to inable them to do this. When once the whole will of God, concerning our salvation, is made known, and fully and certainly deliver'd to the world, this is such a test and standard of truth, as renders a farther revelation superfluous; and therefore the extraordinary direction of the spirit was only requisite for the first fixing and settling the great rule of our judgment and practice. When once that is put into mens hands, if it be as clear and full as God intended it should be, all the purposes are answer'd which a continued revelation could be suppos'd to serve; unless we can be so absurd as to suppose that the all-wise God is capable of improving with time, and that he could not make as clear and full discoveries at once, if he pleas'd, as he could by a continued course of them. 'Tis true, before the sun of righteousness appear'd, clouds and darkness cover'd the world; and these it pleas'd God gradually to disperse as his arising drew nearer. Hence there was such a continued series of revelation afforded to the ancient people of *Israel*; by which means God did in a manner compensate for the obscurity of that ceremonial religion which he had establish'd among them. But the case is vastly different



## Christ's Commission to his Apostles. 311

now grace and truth are come by Jesus Christ ; Sermon  
now life and immortality are brought to light XII.  
by the gospel ; now the vail being taken away,   
*we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory  
of the Lord.* Christ having taken care to leave  
us a compleat system of truth, his church does  
not need any new revelation ; the same that was  
sufficient for christians at first, is sufficient for  
them in all ages, if they will but keep to it.

But then 'tis evident, that for the first deli-  
vering this revelation to the world, an extraor-  
dinary assistance from God was necessary. *As no* 1 Cor. ii.  
*man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of*<sup>11.</sup>  
*man which is in him ; even so the things of God*  
*knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.* How  
should the *natural man*, that is, any man who  
has not a revelation either immediately or me-  
diately, *receive the things of the spirit ?* How  
should any one *know the mind of the Lord*, unless  
he is pleased to discover it to him ? *The things*  
*which God has revealed by his spirit*, are such as  
*eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have ever*  
*enter'd into the heart of man :* They could not be  
known but by a divine manifestation.

And this is the ground upon which we build,  
that the sacred pen-men of the scriptures were  
so directed and guided by the spirit of Christ,  
as that they could not deliver any thing, in the  
rule they have left us of truth, that was disa-  
greeable to it. And indeed such assistance was  
necessary for them, who have deliver'd to us  
those discourses of our Lord, which they them-  
selves heard out of his own mouth. They were  
not taken by them in writing, as he deliver'd  
them, nor were they presently penn'd by those  
who have deliver'd them to us ; but several of  
them at the distance of a great many years ;

Sermon as particularly the discourses recorded in St. John's

XII. gospel are generally acknowledg'd to have been.

Now whose memory is naturally strong enough to retain such long discourses, as some of them are, with a sufficient exactness? Or supposing persons to have a great strength of memory; yet how hard would it be for others to depend upon that in so nice a matter as the standard of truth? A small variation in a circumstance, or a single word, which a man may easily be guilty of, who repeats another's discourse long before deliver'd; and especially when he repeats it in a different language from that in which it was at first spoken; such a small variation, I say, may make the sense conveyed to us vastly different from the speaker's. And if we could depend upon the memory of the reporter, yet that would hardly in this case be sufficient. For we must likewise suppose that he certainly took the speaker right, and did not mistake his meaning; otherwise his memory will only help him in this case, to acquaint us with his own mistake. And this he must certainly do, without leaving us any remedy for our information, when he expresses a discourse, not in the original words and syllables of the speaker, but in those of another language, which he must be supposed to choose as they appear to him most proper to express his mistaken apprehension. We could not therefore have an intire satisfaction in the accounts they have left us in their writings, had we not reason to believe they were guided themselves by the spirit in what they wrote. This our Lord promis'd his apostles before his departure from them. *But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,*

John xiv.  
26.



## Christ's Commission to his Apostles. 313

brance, whatsoever I have said unto you. And **Sermon**  
again: How be it, when the spirit of truth is come, **XII.**  
he will guide you into all truth.

Another thing that was necessary for those <sup>John xv. 13.</sup>  
first ministers of Christ's kingdom, and which  
distinguishes their teaching from that of their  
successors, is the attestation of miracles. <sup>God Heb. ii. 4.</sup>  
*bore them witness, both with signs and wonders, and  
with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost,  
according to his own will.* It was not enough for  
them, when they brought a new doctrine to  
the world, to declare they receiv'd it from God.  
When men only bear witness to themselves,  
they are not to be believ'd in such an important  
matter as this, of setting up a new religion, and  
teaching the way of eternal salvation to men.  
There have been several who have pretended  
to this, whose pretences have been so inconsistent  
with one another, that 'twas impossible they  
should all of them be allow'd.

There must therefore be some way, whereby  
God himself does bear witness to the commission  
of those whom he employs as his messengers, to  
bring a new revelation of his will to mankind.  
And certainly the extraordinary operations of  
the holy spirit, which accompanied the apostles  
and first preachers of the gospel, were as full an  
evidence as any could be given of their being  
sent of God. The miraculous gifts of heal-  
ing, of tongues, the power of raising the dead,  
and such like, could proceed from no other au-  
thor but God. And 'tis not to be suppos'd that  
he would bestow these upon such as falsely pre-  
tended to have receiv'd a commission from him.  
He would not set his seal to their sham commissi-  
on, and by such an attestation recommend them  
as his messengers to the world, when they came  
with a lye in their mouth. **And**

Sermon XII. And thus did the apostles teach, giving full proof of their doctrine by the works which the spirit wrought by them. Hence their doctrine was not receiv'd as theirs, but as God's, who sent and bore witness to them. Upon which account one of them thus expresses himself:

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

1 Thes. i. 5. *And elsewhere: Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the holy ghost, and in much assurance.*

Some such evidence was necessary for them, when they brought a new doctrine; but 'tis not for us. The confirmation then given so miraculously to their teaching, is really a confirmation of ours; and we may appeal to it as such, if we preach nothing but what they did. And indeed unless we allow this, we must suppose no teacher worthy to be received, who is not himself empower'd to work miracles; which would make miracles so ordinary and common in all ages of the church, that they would then lose perhaps a considerable degree of the evidence they now carry in them, by reason of their being strange and unusual.

2. The ministers of Christ are to teach men by diligently *explaining* and *urging*, in their publick discourses, the things which God has reveal'd to the world. This the apostles did; who, where they came, *kept back nothing that was profitable to the people, but shewed them, and taught them publickly.* And this they were able to do with an infallible certainty, by reason of the inspiration of the spirit: And yet they reason'd with men, and used such arguments as

were



were proper to convince their judgments. Their Sermon  
indeavour was to *persuade men*. Thus we read XII.  
of St. Paul at Ephesus, that he went into the syna-  
gogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months,  
disputing and persuading the things concerning the  
kingdom of God. His manner was to reason with the  
Jews and Greeks, and persuade them, as we find  
by several passages concerning him, and the ac-  
count given of some of his discourses. He ex-  
pected no further credit from his hearers, than  
what the force of his reasonings would procure  
him: And most diligent and laborious was he  
in following this his employment. And as the  
preaching of the word is the great means God  
uses for the converting and saving men, this is  
a work, to which those who would pass under the  
character of ministers, should give themselves.  
The apostle makes it one qualification of persons  
who were to be admitted to the sacred office,  
that they should be apt to teach; however some  
men now disparage this part of the office, and  
in a way of contempt, bestow the name of *teachers*  
as a diminutive one upon the men they despise  
and hate; not thinking it honourable enough for  
themselves.

I hope, however we observe the contempt  
with which such men are pleased to use us, we  
shall never be ashamed of the honourable name,  
but act according to it; and endeavour to teach  
men, not that wisdom which they will need to  
be untaught, if they have ever learned it, I  
mean that wisdom that lies in bitter envying and  
strife; but that wisdom which is from above,  
which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy  
to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits,  
without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Sermon 3. Another way of teaching which the mini<sup>st</sup>

XII. sters of Christ are to practise, is more *privat<sup>e</sup>* and *personal*. Of this the apostles are examples to us. So St. Paul taught at *Ephesus*, not only

Acts xx. *publickly*, but *from house to house*: And for the  
20, 31. *space of three years, ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*. And thus he says to the

1 Thes. ii. *Thessalonians*: *You know how we exhorted, and com-  
11. forted, and charged every one of you; as a father doth his children*. And 'tis not unreasonable to

suppose, he intends to recommend the like personal application, when he gives *Timothy* directions for the discharge of his office toward several sort of persons, 1 *Tim.* v. 1, 2. and vi. 17, 18. 2 *Tim.* iv. 2.

This I fear is a sort of teaching which we are all too defective in at this day. And though the fault lies very much at the door of ministers, yet 'twill not be, perhaps, altogether in our power to remedy it, unless the people will encourage us to it, by shewing a readiness and forwardness on their part to receive us in this manner. Doubtless, much good might be done this way now, as well as in the apostles times, were there but a suitable concurrence of the indeavours of ministers, and the desires of the people in this respect. It seems to me a much easier thing to entertain the people with set discourses in publick, than to guide and direct private conversation to the most useful purposes. A reservedness, that is the effect of a man's natural temper, or of a studious kind of life; or a want of a presence of mind will soon discover a man's unskilfulness in this respect; unless those he deals with will contribute their assistance, by encouraging instructive and useful discourse, and not take occasion to turn off the

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conversation from any profitable subject when Sermon  
'tis started. I am too sensible of the duty to  
omit the mentioning it; and yet am so conscious  
of my own defect, that I am sure I may well  
blush to say more about it. Mr. Baxter's trea-  
tise, call'd *Gildas Salvianus*, cannot well be read  
without trembling, by those who fall so vastly  
short of what he seems to have attain'd, of a  
fitness and capacity for this most useful work and  
business of a minister.

4. Another way of teaching which ministers  
are to use is that of *example*. This is a very  
proper way of leading men into the discharge of  
religious duties and services. Men will not so easi-  
ly learn these by bare rules and directions, tho'  
laid down with great exactness, as they will by  
seeing others go before them putting them in  
practice. This is so obvious, that 'tis not usual  
for men to attempt to learn any art or trade  
without the help of example, as well as precept.  
And ministers are to endeavour, by their exam-  
ple, to recommend those virtues which they  
urge upon their hearers in their preaching. They  
are in an especial manner the lights of the world:  
And 'tis their duty to endeavour that their *light*  
*may so shine before men, as that they may see their*  
*good works, and glorify our heavenly Father.* They  
are more eminently the salt of the earth; but if  
they have lost their savour, they are thenceforth  
good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden  
under foot of men. The apostles were very  
careful in their conversation; and could appeal  
to the consciences of those among whom they  
lived and preach'd, as testifying concerning their  
behaviour. *Ye are witnesses,* says St. Paul to the  
*Thessalonians, and God also, how holily, and justly,*  
*and unblameably we behaved our selves among you*  
*that*

1 Thes. ii.

10.

Sermon *that believe.* He would even abridge himself of

XII. what he might have insisted upon as his right, that, he might *make himself an example to them,*

<sup>2</sup> Thes. iii. 9. *that they might follow him.* Nor was he unconcern'd whether others in the ministry were like himself in their conversation. He insists upon it as a necessary qualification of the persons who should be admitted into the ministry, that their

<sup>1</sup> Tim. iii. 2, 7. behaviour should be *blameless,* and their virtues so conspicuous, as not only to gain them an approbation among christians, but likewise a *good report of them that are without.* He urges it therefore upon Timothy, that he should be

Ch. iv. 12. *an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity :* And

Tit. ii. 7. upon Titus, that in *all things* he should *shew himself a pattern of good works.* And another apostle urges it upon the elders in general to dis-

<sup>1</sup> Pet. v. 3. charge their duty to their flocks, *not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

Let mens improvements and accomplishments be ever so great in other respects, they will make very sorry teachers without this. The notoriously wicked and ungodly life of the preacher, will enervate the strength of his arguments, and the charms of his eloquence. Mens love to their sinful courses is very strong, and will not suffer them much to regard the preacher's arguments, when it plainly appears he does not much believe them himself. There are no greater pests in the christian church, than vicious and scandalous ministers. These grieve the pious, dishearten the weak, encourage the loose and profane, and harden the enemies of our holy religion in their prejudices against it, and contempt of it. No doubt this has been one great occasion



tion of the great looseness and debauchery of the present age, and of those vast swarms there are of profess'd enemies to revealed religion among us. Nor can it seem strange, that the zeal of such men flames out against virtuous and sober ministers, whether they are, or are not, of their own communion. And for God's sake, my brethren, if we would do any good in the world by our preaching, or if we would not have true religion and godliness quite perish out of the land, let us be very careful, that whatever we lose, we may never forfeit this part of our character. There's an end then of our usefulness, and we must become the scorn and contempt of mankind. We may see it in such persons among our adversaries, who cannot avoid being the jest and scorn of those who care for them as the tools of their faction. And how should it be otherwise? How natural is it to twit such men, as the apostle does those that were confident that they were guides to the blind, and a light to them that were in darkness? And to say to them as he does, *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?* And in like manner, Thou that preachest a man should not be drunk, art thou a drunkard? Thou that sayest a man should not prevaricate, dost thou prevaricate? Thou that sayest a man should not rebel against the magistrate, dost thou rebel? Thou that abhorrest schism, art thou guilty of perjury? And when men lay themselves open to such reproaches, what good can they expect to do? I conclude therefore, that he that would teach others to

XII.

Rom. ii.  
19, 21, 22.

any

Sermon any purpose, must be careful to do it; as well by

XII. his good conversation, as by his good doctrine; and that the rule our Saviour gave his apostles, when he sent them out during his life time, is necessary in both the parts of it, for those who now minister in his name; that they should not

Mat. x. 16. *only be wise as serpents, but likewise innocent as doves.*

5. The only way of teaching, that I can think of, besides these, is by the use of *christian discipline*. It can't seem strange, if the apostles acted in an extraordinary manner in this, as well as some other respects. They had the immediate and infallible direction of the holy spirit, and were able, without the information of any one else, to detect the wickedness of mens hearts; and to declare the judgments God would inflict in particular cases; as we may see by the account

Acts v. 1, we have of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, &c.

Ec.

Herein they acted wholly by divine direction, and not under the influence of their own passions: And their successors cannot pretend to the like infallibility. In such cases the judgment was executed by God himself; and God's revealing to them his intention to inflict it, was the reason of their denouncing it, and not their denouncing it the reason of the execution. And 'tis really impious to imagine, that God has lodg'd his vengeance in the power of weak and fallible men, and obliged himself to be displeas'd, or pleas'd with men, just as his ministers shall think fit to direct him. The apostles indeed had in readiness to avenge all disobedience, but then their guidance, in the use of it, was as extraordinary as the thing it self. And well is it for our poor land, that such a power is not now lodg'd in the hands of our angry ecclesiastics, of any party among



among us; for we may easily guess, by their Sermon  
temper, what mad work they would make, were XII.  
it left to their mercy and discretion to dispense  
temporal death, and eternal damnation to man-  
kind.

The apostles could deliver wicked men over to  
satan; which, if it imported the putting them un-  
der his immediate power to inflict diseases and di-  
stempers upon them, must needs be look'd upon as  
extraordinary and miraculous, and has therefore  
ceased with them: At least I could never hear,  
that those who pretend to this power, and  
within remembrance were very forward and ex-  
pert in the use of it, could much boast of any  
great ratifications of their censures in that man-  
ner. If by delivering over to satan be meant  
no more, as some think, than the excluding men  
from the communion of the church, and the  
declaring them to belong to the kingdom of  
darkness, or of satan, from whence men are  
translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son;  
the apostles, who could discern mens spirits,  
were able to do this with an infallible certainty;  
nor can it be reasonably doubted, that there is  
still a power belongs to the church to exclude  
from their communion, men who are notoriously  
unworthy of it. To deny this, would be to  
make the church a common instead of an in-  
closure; and to confound the kingdom of Christ  
and satan. But then we must acknowledge that  
this sentence makes no real alteration in a person's  
state with respect to God. The offender is exclud-  
ed the communion of the church, not to deprive  
him of God's favour, but because he is supposed  
already to have depriv'd himself of it. And if  
the church neglects to exclude such an one, that  
will not secure him the divine favour; and if

Sermon she excludes a person without just cause, he

XII.

shall not upon that account be cast off by God. So that mens being accepted, or not accepted with God, their being heirs of salvation or damnation, don't depend upon the absolutions and excommunications of poor weak and rash men; nor do these affect the states of men in the other world. 'Tis true, if a man, by his notorious wickedness, has dishonour'd God, and given offence to, and brought a reproach upon the church, and is thereupon excluded her communion; the church may insist upon a satisfaction, and a man's not giving it may affect his state in the other world, because he does not give that satisfaction to which his duty binds him. But then what is that satisfaction, the not giving of which affects a man's state? 'Tis no other than a satisfaction of his repentance. True repentance certainly restores a man to the divine favour, and will engage a man to give all reasonable satisfaction to those, whom by his sin he has offended. And supposing an offender truly repents, and gives all reasonable evidence hereof, and the church notwithstanding is not satisfied, and continues her censure; can this, do we think, hinder such an one's acceptance with God? Can this affect his state in the other world? 'Tis impossible. The power of the church here, is very much like the power of any injur'd person. He that has wrong'd his neighbour is bound to repent of it; and his repentance cannot be sincere, unless he is willing to do every thing that is reasonable to make satisfaction to the person he has injur'd. Without this, his repentance will not be accepted of God. But can we think, that where there is such a repentance discovering it self in all proper methods,

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methods, a man's acceptance with God shall de- Sermon  
pend upon his neighbour's being satisfied? Or XII.  
that his insisting upon a satisfaction which is  
beyond reason, or out of the injurer's power,  
shall certainly intail upon him eternal damna-  
tion? These two cases do so fully agree, that  
I hope the apprehensions men have of the one,  
will help them to judge rightly of the other.

'Tis hard to know what men mean, who would  
carry their power higher than this account al-  
lows. They cannot themselves but grant that  
the churches sentences are then only of force,  
when they are managed, *Clave non errante*: And  
if that be true, a man's acceptance with God  
must depend upon his own sincerity, and not  
upon the judgment of the church. And they  
who appear most solicitous to magnify this  
power of the key of discipline, have the most  
reason, in their present state, to say least about  
it; since 'tis notorious, that among them the  
key is put into such wrong hands, that it must  
be wonderful if it ever go right.

That the true scripture discipline is one way  
Christ has appointed of teaching, seems plain  
from several passages. This was design'd for  
the reclaiming and saving the offender; the  
bringing him to a sense of his sin, and an hearty  
repentance for it. So the apostle speaks of the  
heavy sentence he inflicted upon *Hymeneus* and *1 Tim. i.*  
*Alexander*: *Whom, says he, I have delivered unto*  
*satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.* This  
was the end aimed at by him, when he ordered  
the *Corinthians* when they were gathered together *1 Cor. v.*  
with his spirit, that they should deliver the in-  
cestuous Corinthian unto *satan*, that the spirit might  
be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The com-  
munion of the church is a most useful and

Sermon valuable privilege, and to deprive a person of  
 XII. it, who used to enjoy it, is a likely means of  
 putting him upon reflecting bitterly on the cause,  
 if he has been himself guilty of any thing to  
 deserve it.

And then this is an useful instruction and warn-  
 ing to others, that they may avoid the like evil  
 courses, and the sad consequences thereof. Hence  
 the apostle prescribes *Timothy* this course with  
 1 Tim. v. offenders : *Them that sin rebuke before all, that*  
 20. *others also may fear.*

But 'tis manifest, that this way of teaching  
 extends only to those who are in the communion  
 1 Cor. v. of the church. *What have I to do,* says the apo-  
 12, 13. *stle, to judge them also that are without ? Do not*  
*ye judge them that are within ? But them that are*  
*without God judgeth. Therefore put away from*  
*among your selves that wicked person.*

'Tis indeed a grand absurdity for men to pre-  
 tend to exercise this discipline upon any but those  
 of their own church ; that is, to turn those out  
 of the communion of their church who were ne-  
 ver in it. And 'tis really very wonderful, that  
 men who pretend to common sense, should ever  
 plead for the reviving such kind of discipline:  
 Job xx. 12. But the truth is, this morsel was formerly *sweet*  
*in their mouth,* and therefore they still *bide it under*  
*their tongue.*

And as this way of teaching is only to be used  
 in the case of great and heinous offences, so it  
 belongs not to the ministers of Christ to enforce  
 it by any temporal penalties. There are some  
 Judg. viii. who are for teaching men as *Gideon taught the*  
 16. *men of Succoth, with thorns of the wilderness and*  
*briars.* But if they will look into the commission  
 they pretend to have received from Christ,  
 they will find nothing of this nature therein.

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He has never allowed his ministers the use of carnal weapons for compelling men into his service : It belongs to magistrates to punish any immorality that disturbs the peace of the civil society, by fines or corporal punishments, &c. but the power of ministers is purely spiritual. They are to teach such as are willing to learn ; and if men will not receive them as their teachers, and hearken to their doctrine, they have nothing more to do but to shake off the dust of their feet against them ; and leave them to him whose message they bring, and who judges them that are without : Or if they have been enter'd into the church by baptism, they may cast them out of it, if they deserve to be so dealt with. But to punish them in their persons, estates, or civil liberties is what they have no power to do. Christ's kingdom is spiritual, the sanctions of his laws are such ; and they pervert the design of his instituting a ministry in his church, who would lodge a temporal power in his ministers to make men obedient to his laws. He may himself break his enemies in pieces with an iron rod ; but if he had design'd his ministers should make use of any such, he would certainly have left us some where or other, in his gospel, a little hint of it ; and the zealous advocates for such a power, would before this time have been able to discover it, and so have clear'd themselves from that imputation which now lies upon them ; that 'tis covetousness and lust of power that makes them pretend to it. For our parts we affect not, nay, we utterly disclaim any such power. We own our office is purely design'd for your good, and we are your servants for Christ's sake. If we are *rulers over our master's household*, 'tis but in the nature of stewards and

XII.

Sermon *servants, to give you meat in due season.* And

XII. the Lord make us wise and faithful to do it as we ought ! I wish they who are for *beating their fellow servants*, would consider the awful threatening our Lord has denounc'd against such, *Mat. xxiv. 48, &c.* And thus I have consider'd the general nature of the imployment assign'd to the ministers of the gospel, or the power Christ has intrusted them with ; 'tis to teach.

II. I come now to consider the subject matter of their teaching ; or what they were to teach men, *viz. to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them.*

The things which Christ has commanded are of two sorts, according to a very common and good distinction. Some things he has commanded us to believe, and some things he has commanded us to do : And 'tis the business and duty of ministers to teach men to observe both these, and no more.

I. Then they are to teach men to observe, that is, to believe the things which Christ has commanded them to believe. Perhaps some may be ready to think, that the expression of *observing what he has commanded*, must be restrain'd wholly to matters of practice, and not take in those of faith. But there is no reason for that ; we are as much bound to conform our belief, as our practice to his commands ; and ministers have no more authority to press any thing upon men, beyond his command, in one case than another. Nor is there any impropriety in the term, that we have here render'd *observe*, when 'tis applied to matters of faith. To which purpose I need only take notice of one place of scripture, where the same word is used ; and that is, *where the apostle says of himself, I have kept the faith.*

2 Tim. iv.  
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*Christ's Commission to his Apostles.* 327

The Romish church has multiplied articles of Sermon  
faith which are not to be found in the scrip- XII.  
ture: And one advantage the reformation gain'd  
by it; that the extravagant number of them  
gave protestants in general a surfeit of those kind  
of impositions, as it well might; and put them  
upon a necessity of cutting off all at once, with  
that noble principle, which is the foundation of  
the reformation; and in which protestants have  
prefess'd their agreement, That nothing can be  
made a necessary article of the christian faith,  
which is not contain'd, and delivered as such,  
in the revelation which God has given us. What  
Christ has required men to believe, that mini-  
sters are obliged to teach them; but by what  
authority do they require them to receive more?  
The inspiration by which the holy scriptures are  
written, renders them an infallible rule for our  
faith: But how can we be assur'd that those  
who had not that inspiration, were not mistaken  
in what they have deliver'd to us? The church  
of *Rome*, which assumes a power of fixing ar-  
ticles of faith, does very consistently with that  
pretence, claim an infallibility, which is the  
only thing upon which such a claim can be built.  
But the proofs by which they would support  
this important claim are so very weak, and the  
evidences in fact, of their having erred, are so  
many and plain, that we can't be under any  
great temptation for their sakes, to question  
whether the scriptures are the only rule of our  
faith.

And one would think our principle should not  
be in any danger of an attack from those men,  
who are themselves forced to espouse and defend  
it in their disputing with our common enemies.  
It very much resembles the unrighteousness there

Sermon is in having divers weights and divers measures,  
 XII. when men will not allow us that principle,  
 which they earnestly contend the papists should  
 allow them.

And to suppose that any man, or body of men, without inspiration, has a right to fix and determine the sense of scripture, so that others shall be bound to receive their interpretations upon the account of their authority, is really to give up this principle. For what other reason can there be, why I am to believe any article of christianity but this, that God has declared it in that revelation which he has vouchsafed us? So far then only as I see God has revealed any thing in his word, can I reasonably believe it. But if I must take it upon trust, without seeing the evidence my self, I then don't depend upon the testimony of God, but of men, who being supposed fallible, may as well give a false interpretation as a true one: And after this rate I may be bound to receive that as an article of faith which God has never revealed at all. Nor is there any doctrine so absurd, that men may not by this artifice turn into an article of faith. 'Tis but for them, with a bold face, to declare that such or such an interpretation is true, and the thing is done. If men may determine the sense of scripture by authority, without reason and argument, how easy is it for them to establish the doctrine of purgatory? 'Tis but to declare, by their authority, that those texts, *He went and preached to the spirits in prison, and, He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*; speak of purgatory. Nay, how easily may transubstantiation it self, by this means, commence an article of faith, if these interpreters will but see fit to exert their  
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1 Pet. iii.

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1 Cor. iii.

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authority in fixing the sense of our Lord's words, *Sermon XII.*  
*This is my body.*

'Tis pretended by some, the church has this power in doubtful and difficult cases. But this is only a cunning fetch to recover that authority which they would seem to give up : For it would be very strange, if the church should have this power in doubtful and difficult cases, and not in those that are not doubtful and difficult ; that is, if she should have it where she is most, and not where she is least liable to mistake. Besides, what are these doubtful and difficult cases, but such about which men cannot agree ? And thus the church must have this power in any controversy, to determine it on which side she pleases. And can the papists desire more ? or have they any occasion to use their authority where men don't differ from them ? So that this hooks in as ample a power in all cases as they pretend to ; just as the spiritual power of the church draws the temporal after it, with an *in ordine ad spiritualia*. And this cannot be avoided, if they claim (as doubtless they will claim) a right to determine which are the difficult cases. And either these cases are difficult and doubtful only to the people, or else to those also who assume this authority. If they are difficult and doubtful to themselves, how can they be secure of the goodness of their determination ? If they are only difficult to the people, why should they not rather depend upon the force of their own reasons and arguments, than their authority ? Why should they not treat the people as reasonable creatures, endeavouring to convince rather than enslave their judgments ? It breeds a suspicion that cases are not clear to men, and that they are very unfit to determine them,

Sermon

XII.

them, when they flee to a pretended authority for the defence of their determinations ; and care not to let them rest upon the strength of the reasons they have to allege in their behalf.

No uninspired persons therefore have a right to insist upon others receiving any thing as an article of faith, that is not contained in the holy scriptures. And I will add, that it ought to be very clearly and expressly contain'd there, in order to our having any right to insist upon its being believed. A great difference is to be made between a clear and positive assertion of a thing, and a deduction of it from other things, by a train of consequences. In the latter we are liable to mistake, and therefore are to make allowances to those who do not see the force of our reasoning. A thing that is not expressly asserted in scripture, may sometimes be well proved from it by consequences : But then 'tis only proved to him that sees the proof ; and however clear the proof is to my self, if I cannot make it plain to another, I ought not to be unwilling to bear with him in his dissent from me ; since the things that are absolutely necessary to salvation are laid down in the most clear and express terms, and do not depend upon any such deductions and consequences.

2. There are other things which Christ has commanded men to do ; and these his ministers are to teach people to observe. These are of two sorts.

1. He has given us commands concerning our conversation and behaviour in the world. The holy scriptures, being a compleat rule of all those virtues that are to shine forth in our conversations, the ministers of the gospel have no

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## Christ's Commission to his Apostles. 331

occasion to teach men any other. And as the **Sermon**  
great design of revelation is to make men good **XII.**  
and holy, so nothing is more proper to be ex-  
plain'd and inculcated upon our hearers, than  
those rules of goodness which Christ has requir'd  
men to observe. We are to teach them to  
practise that justice, charity, mercy, meekness,  
beneficence, patience, temperance, and such like  
virtues, which Christ has recommended to us,  
both by his example and by his commands. And  
in this, I suppose, men will not pretend we are  
to teach men any thing but what he has com-  
manded.

2. There are other commands which he has  
given us for the worship of God; and these we  
are to teach men to observe. And if the *scrip- 2 Tim. iii.*  
*tures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for* 16, 17.  
*correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the*  
*man of God, i. e. the minister of the gospel may*  
*be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works,*  
i. e. compleatly furnish'd for every part of his  
office; there can be no need of his teaching  
men to observe any other rules of worshipping  
God, than those Christ has left us. And he that  
pretends to prescribe other laws of worship  
than Christ has done, invades his prerogative  
as king of the church, and virtually accuses  
him of being defective in the discharge of his  
office. And our Saviour has expressly guarded  
against the officiousness of those who would add  
to the rule of worship; assuring us, that all the  
worship that is of humane device, and not of  
divine appointment, is vain. Thus when the  
Scribes and Pharisees pleaded the traditional  
commands of the elders for the washing hands  
before meat, making it a religious act, ne-  
cessary to be done, because enjoyn'd by such

Sermon authority ; our Saviour answers them : *Well hath*

XII. *Esaïas prophesied of you hypocrites, as 'tis written,*  
 ~~~~~ *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their*  
 Mark vii. *heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they*
 6, 7. *worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments*
of men. 'Tis true, the words in vain are not in
Esaïas, according to the reading of our present
copies ; but it seems reasonable, upon the au-
thority of Christ and the seventy, to suppose that
*was the ancient reading **.

However that be, 'tis evident that such worship is vain, and not pleasing to God. By what right then can men require us to practise it? Christ has given us commands concerning the worship of God ; these he requires his ministers to teach people to observe ; and can this be any warrant to them to give them other rules of worshipping God? The worship of God will be intire and decent when Christ's commands alone are observ'd, without the additions which men make to them.

. Having thus spoken to the two things I propos'd from the words, I shall conclude with these three reflections :

1. If the commission our Lord gives his ministers is of this nature ; how great is the unhappiness of the christian church, that this commission has not been kept closer to ! How many mischiefs would have been prevented, if men had contented themselves with the character of teachers, without affecting a dominion over mens consciences ; or arrogating a temporal power to
 com-

* The alteration I suppose made, is only the changing of a י into ו and that we should read וְתָרָו for וְתָרָו, and such a change of those two letters is many times absolutely necessary to be made, and therefore actually is made in the
 X.ri.

Christ's Commission to his Apostles. 333

compel them to obey them ! Many families have been ruin'd, much blood has been shed, and many mens consciences have been wounded, while the commission of Christ has been transgressed. Sermon XII.

2. Let this be a warning to us in the ministry ; and let us labour to keep close to the business Christ has intrusted us with. And we have especial reason to be upon our guard, that we may not break bounds, because we condemn others for doing so. We blame those who assume an authority over mens consciences ; let us not then make our selves obnoxious to the same charge. If we are to teach only what Christ has commanded, let us not insist upon doubtful matters, or expect an uniformity of mens notions with our own, in things not expressly revealed, and that are not absolutely necessary to salvation. And while we justly blame men for making their own articles, creeds, or confessions the standard of truth, which they require others to subscribe, let us press nothing but the holy scriptures, and insist upon them only as the rule of faith and practice. We blame men, and with good reason, when they bring in their peculiar and doubtful notions into a liturgy, which they prescribe for publick use, and from which they allow not men to vary : Let us then beware of any thing of the like nature in our prayers, that are without a form. These are not design'd to publish nice speculations, and our judgment in matters doubtful and controverted. They are design'd that all may readily join with us in them in our addresses to God ; and therefore 'tis my humble opinion they should be so order'd, as not to bring in any thing unnecessary, that any good christian would stick at.

3. If

Sermon

XII.

3. If Christ has given us such a commission, then is it the duty of people to hearken to us, and comply with us as long as we keep to it. What Christ has made it our duty to teach, he has made it your duty to learn. And if we urge nothing upon you but the commands of Christ, you can't refuse to hear us without *refusing him that speaketh to you from heaven*. We profess we desire not any farther to be regarded in any thing we recommend as a matter of faith or practice, than as the same appears to be so recommended to you by Christ himself in his gospel. And if we are careful on both sides in doing our duty, we in teaching, and you in learning to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded, we may expect his blessing and concurrence, since he has promis'd to be with us *alway, even to the end of the world*. Amen.

The

*The Sufferings of the Apostle a further-
ance of the Gospel.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

E X O N,

DEC. 27, 1719.

At the Opening of the new built
MEETING-HOUSE there.

PHILIP. I. 12.

*But I would that ye should understand,
brethren, that the things which hap-
pen'd unto me, have fallen out rather
to the furtherance of the Gospel.*

THE methods of divine providence Sermon
are oftentimes very myfterious in XIII.
the beginning; nor is it unusual that
the first steps that are taken to-
wards any glorious event, should appear dark
and

Sermon and puzzling, till the bright scene in the close
 XIII. begins to open, and to discover the admirable
 wisdom and contrivance of the whole procedure.
 The greatest advantages of the church have
 been frequently usher'd in by the sharpest
 troubles : *Weeping has induc'd for a night,*
when joy was to succeed in the morning. And
 God has design'd to *bring about much good* to his
 people, by those very things which they have
 been apt hastily to pronounce to be *all against*
them.

Many instances of this nature are left upon
 record in the holy scriptures. When the gospel,
 the great means of eternal salvation, was to be
 preached through the world, the preachers were
 at first very few ; the number was indeed soon
 increased ; but the apostles, who were Christ's
 chief ministers, and who alone were intrusted
 with the most full and ample powers, were not
 only few at their first sending, but continued
 so ; there having been only one, or at most two
 added to their original number. And when
 their number was so small, and yet their work
 so important, what pity was it, as we are apt
 to think, that they should be at all interrupted
 or hinder'd in the exercise of their ministry ?
 What a noble instrument did this apostle, after
 he was converted and call'd, prove, of spread-
 ing the religion of the blessed Jesus in the world ?
 And what christian, wishing well to the success
 of the gospel, could be otherwise than concern'd
 and troubled, when he saw a restraint laid upon
 his ministry ; and that he himself was a prisoner,
 and in bonds, who was unwearied in going up
 and down to preach the gospel ? And yet this
 was his case, when he wrote the epistle wherein
 is the text. And the *Philippians*, who were a
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church of his own planting, very much endeared to him, not only by their ready receiving the gospel, but also by their hearty and affectionate concern for him, could not but be now troubled upon his account. Hence he appears solicitous here to comfort them; and to that end assures them that his very bonds were become of considerable service to the gospel. Thus in the words of the text: *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happen'd unto me, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel:* And in what manner they turn'd to such account he shews in some following verses.

In speaking to these words I will,

- I. Take some further notice of *the things that happen'd to the apostle*, and shew you what they were.
- II. Represent to you how these things *fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel*.
- III. Endeavour to improve this to our own comfort, in our present circumstances.

I. Then I am to consider what the apostle means by *the things which happen'd unto him*, or the things that *related to him*.

And the things he here speaks of are,

1. What I have already mention'd, his *bonds* for the sake of the gospel. In the next verse to the text, he shews plainly that these were what he chiefly intended. *So that*, says he, *my bonds in Christ, or for Christ, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places*. In the end of the *Acts of the apostles*, you have a large account of the manner of his becoming a prisoner, and of his being sent as such to *Rome*; and there he was; and very probably 'twas during that same

Sermon imprisonment that he wrote this epistle. That XIII. he was prisoner at Rome seems plain, partly by his mentioning the *palace*, or *pretorium*, which our margin renders *Cesar's court*, ver. 13. and partly, and more fully by his sending to the *Philippians* the *salutations* of those of *Cesar's household*, Chap. iv. 22.

And as this epistle has a considerable likeness to those to the *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, they are all three generally supposed to be written much about the same time; nor do I find it much doubted whether that was not during St. Paul's first imprisonment, of which we have, as I said, an account in the *Acts*.

When the apostle shews himself so solicitous, that the *Philippians* should understand that his *bonds* had turn'd to an advantage, he implies, what 'tis very easy to suppose, that there was somewhat in the nature of them that was grievous, and might be thought likely to turn to a disadvantage. And certainly whatever there was grievous and troublesome in them, had a tendency to affright and discourage persons from imbracing a religion which they saw exposed to such things.

'Tis grievous to us to be abridg'd of our liberty. As we are free agents, we love to act out of choice, and without restraint and compulsion, to be at our own disposal, and not subject to the will and controul of other men. Besides, variety and change is agreeable to our busy minds; perpetually to be imploy'd in the same business, or confin'd to one place, is disagreeable to us. Motion and exercise, the beholding of new objects, and a free conversing with our friends, without any to watch and observe us, the taking our own time for what we do; these

and such like things are pleasant and entertaining ; and we cannot without reluctance and regret, bear to be depriv'd of them. And let the restraint be in other respects ever so easy, yet to be depriv'd of our natural right in a thing that is justly so dear to us, and to be always in the power, and under the eye of those who are already displeased with us, and consequently whom it will be hard not to offend, and to be subject to a continual dread of their farther displeasure, must make such a state of life to be very unpleasant and uneasy to any man.

There are besides, many inconveniencies that often accompany such a condition, prisons being not ordinary places of good accommodation ; the rough tempers, unhealthy air, bad company, and coarse usage which are generally met with in such places, render them very uncomfortable.

'Tis true, God lighten'd *St. Paul's* trouble in these respects ; for though he was a prisoner, yet by the providence of God he was a prisoner at large ; not straitly confined, but *suffer'd to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him,* Acts xxviii. 16, 30. But beside the inconvenience of such company, and such a constant spy upon a man's conversation, there is one thing that must make it a great burthen, and that is the charge which such a confinement must of necessity bring upon him.

Farther, there is a disgrace and reproach that is always supposed to accompany this condition. As the usage is a punishment, so it implies, when 'tis not for debt, that there is some guilt that is the cause of it. The respect that is due to magistrates who are to execute justice, requires that we should presume, till the contrary ap-

Sermon pears, that they do not inflict any punishment
XIII. without some crime that has justly deserved it.

~ The apostle therefore takes notice of this as an aggravation of his trouble, 2 Tim. ii. 9. *Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds.* And tho' christianity provides us with proper supports, yet to be treated as a criminal, cannot but be grievous to an ingenuous mind.

Besides, this could not but be grievous to the apostle, as it was an hindrance to him in the work his heart was so much set upon, and he was, when at liberty, so abundant in. Nothing was more agreeable to him than to be preaching the gospel, and spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ in the world; in this he was *willing to spend, and to be spent*; he valued not life it self, but that he might promote the honour of his Lord; and therefore a restraint upon him by bonds could not be otherwise than very troublesom and afflictive. This now is the chief thing which he designs by this expression, *The things which happen'd unto me.*

2. Another thing, which though it be not the chief, yet may well enough be understood to be included, since he afterwards expressly mentions it; is the *envy and opposition* he met with from some of his brethren, who were also preachers of the gospel. This he takes notice of, ver. 15. *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.* By these, as he hints afterward, ver. 18. *Christ was preached in pretence*; and their design seems to have been, according to ver. 20. to make the apostle *ashamed*. He does not here expressly mention who these preachers were; but 'tis easy to guess

they were the same kind of men he used to have the greatest trouble from, viz. the Jewish converts, who being zealous for the ceremonial law, gave him no small disturbance by their indeavours to corrupt the gentile churches, from the simplicity that was in Christ. And the trouble which the apostle met with from them in his bonds at *Rome*, so sensibly affected him when he was writing to the *Philippians*, that he could not but earnestly caution them against them, as he does at large in the beginning of the third chapter.

The great aim of this sort of men, seems to have been to set up and magnify themselves, by depreciating and running down *St. Paul*. For this end they improved every trifle against him, the meanness of his bodily presence, and the unpleasantness of his voice : And above all, they made a mighty advantage of his paying but little deference to the ceremonies of the old law, and his slighting that ceremonial righteousness, of which they themselves made the highest account. The apostle thoroughly understood, and earnestly defended the christian liberty : And 'tis not hard to conceive how this might be improv'd against him, as a popular prejudice, among the converts from judaism. They were so wedded to their old religious service, so early and strongly prepossessed with the opinion of the excellency and unalterableness of the *Mosaic* constitution, that it could not be hard for these *evil workers*, who sought to undermine *St. Paul*, to work upon them, and to inflame their passions against him in that respect. But 'tis really hard to account for it, that this should be, as yet by his epistles to the gentile churches it seems to have been, a popular

Sermon prejudice among them ; and that they should
 XIII. be easily inamour'd with bondage, and be dis-
 ~~~~~ pleased with so excellent an advocate for christi-  
 ~~~~~ an liberty. But if we reflect upon succeeding  
 ages, and particularly if we make any careful
 and prudent observation of our own ; we must
 allow that there is somewhat very unaccounta-
 ble in mens conduct in this regard, and that
 they seem to act under some strange infatuation.
 And this seems to have been the apostle's sense
 of the matter, when he put that question to
 the *Galatians* in a way of admiration, *Gal. iii. 1.*
O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitch'd you ?

This must be owned likewise to be a consi-
 derable trouble, when we meet with opposition
 from those who are particularly bound to in-
 courage and forward us ; or as the apostle
 speaks in another case, when we *have sorrow from*
them of whom we ought to rejoice. From open
 and professed enemies nothing is to be expected
 but opposition ; and so there is no disappoint-
 ment when we meet with it : But it must be a
 great disappointment and vexation, when our
 chief hindrance is from our friends and brethren,
 when those who profess the same religion, own
 the same God, call themselves the disciples and
 servants of the same Lord, and ministers of the
 same gospel ; when such, I say, shall rise against
 us, and oppose us for doing our duty, become our
 enemies for speaking the truth, and studying
 the things that make for peace ; when they
 shall make it their business to prejudice people
 against us, rob us of our reputation, and cry
 us down as *deceivers* and corrupters of the gos-
 pel ; and our sincere indeavours to spread the
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incourage and joyn with us in the design; the unreasonableness and unaccountableness of such conduct, may well be surprizing and troublesome. And this was one of the things which happen'd to the apostle. Sermon XIII.

II. I am next to represent to you how these things may be understood to have *fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.* The word *rather* either is to be taken to signify *especially*, or in a *peculiar manner*, or else it has a sort of tacit reference to the design of his enemies, and the natural tendency of their conduct, *q. d.* You are sensible what I have met with, and with what design such a violent opposition has been made against me; but I would ye should understand that the actors have been exceedingly disappointed in their enterprize; instead of answering their expectation, and retarding the progress of the gospel, they have occasion'd the contrary, and the gospel has by their proceedings been promoted; and while I have been bound, that has been enlarg'd; as he speaks elsewhere, *2 Tim. ii. 9. Wherein, or for which gospel I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of the Lord is not bound:* My restraint has not been a restraint upon that; that has had a free course notwithstanding; nay, has diffused and spread it self the more.

Now the things which happen'd unto him, may be supposed to have *fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel* in these respects following:

I. His afflictions may be supposed to have moved the compassion and pity of christians toward him, and to have heighten'd their regard to what he said. As prejudice against the preacher stops the ear, and hardens the heart

Sermon against receiving any advantage by what he
 XIII. says, and renders men proof against the strongest arguments, and the most moving rhetoric; so affection engages a regard, and gives the greatest advantage imaginable to the arguments and persuasions of any instructor. When once pity is moved, it softens the mind, and disposes it to receive impressions. When we meet with a person whose afflictions and pains are obvious, and our compassion is stirr'd toward him, how readily do we credit all the account he gives of himself? And so it may well be supposed to have been in the apostle's case. His bonds would create pity, and then he could not easily fail of that regard he desired from christians.

We may observe therefore that St. Paul, who seems to have thoroughly understood all the proper ways of moving the affections, and working upon the passions, and accordingly uses them with the greatest art for the gaining his most noble design, did not fail to bespeak the regard of christians in this very manner. Thus in his epistle to the *Ephesians*, chap. iii. 1. *For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles*; chap. iv. 1. *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*. Thus again, when he desires their prayers for himself, that he might *make known the mystery of the gospel*, he puts them in mind of this, and immediately adds, *For which I am an ambassador in bonds*, chap. vi. 20. In like manner he requests the prayers of the *Colossians*, chap. iv. 3. And he seems to declare here in the chapter wherein is the text, that the *Philippians* had been moved with compassion toward him by his bonds. Thus he speaks, *ver. 7.* especially if we follow the render-

rendering of our margin, which seems the best. Sermon
Even as 'tis meet for me to think this of you all, XIII.

because you have me in your heart, in as much as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace. He seems to mean that by their fellowship for the service of the gospel, *ver. 5.* that is, by sending to him in his bonds, and communicating to his wants, and encouraging him in his noble defence of the gospel, they were intitled to a part and share in the reward of his sufferings and services. So that the *Philippians* themselves were an evidence that his bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, since upon this occasion they were made more zealous for the gospel, and became more abounding in love and good works, the fruits of righteousness.

2. His bonds might prove a furtherance to the gospel among christians, as they gave an occasion to Christ to display his power and kindness in supporting his servant, and carrying him through these his troubles. Persecution is a frightful and discouraging thing; but when it evidently appears to us, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for his people under their tryals, and that he actually supports them under them; this abates the dread of them, and reconciles christians very much to a perseverance in religion, notwithstanding the danger.

We find nature is apt to shrink at the thought of such tryals as christianity has exposed men to; and we easily judge, that as we are all of one make, others feel the same reluctance to suffering and trouble in themselves; but when we see what our feeble nature is able to do under divine influences, this may well raise our drooping spirits, since we may perceive that our difficulties

are

Sermon are not to be incountred in our own bare

XIII. strength; but we may depend upon the faithfulness of God, that he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. The apostle's patience and comfort under his trouble, was a furtherance of the gospel, as it gave encouragement to many in freely preaching the gospel. This is an instance expressly mention'd in the context, *ver. 14. And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* When the storm fell upon the preachers especially, this might occasion those that were fit for the work, to decline being imploy'd in it; but when they found by the behaviour of the apostle in his bonds, that the trouble sat easy upon him, they might well resume their courage, and the more undauntedly go on with their work. So it fell out upon that occasion; many became the more confident, and were the more bold to speak the word without fear. No question they were sensible that the work was truly noble and important; but while the difficulties seem'd so great, and they unreasonably magnified in their own thoughts the hazard and danger they ran, they were backward to it; but the apostle's bonds serving to abate of that dread, they became earnest and zealous in the work. And this may well be thought to have been a furtherance of the gospel. There never yet was too great a plenty of faithful labourers in God's harvest, never more than there was occasion for. However loiterers may abound, when the times are prosperous, and persons may feed themselves rather than the flock; yet always has there been

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been a want, rather than a superfluity, of such as had an hearty concern for the true honour of God, and the good of souls, and especially in all times of difficulty and danger. Never yet was the direction of our Lord unseasonable, that we should *pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest*. So that since St. Paul's bonds occasion'd many to preach the gospel, and that very freely, they fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.

4. His bonds were a furtherance to the gospel, as they occasion'd many to inquire what that gospel was for which he suffer'd. 'Tis natural when we hear of any punishments being inflicted upon a person, to desire to know what the crime is he suffers for; and we may well suppose that men would be more than ordinary curious in such a case as this. 'Twas manifest, that the restraint he suffer'd was neither for debt, nor for any wickedness and immorality. He did not suffer as an extortioner, a thief, an adulterer, or under any such odious character.

They who are most forward to give men trouble in such a case as the apostle's, are often tender enough in cases that manifestly deserve the use of severity.

The only reason for his confinement was his opinion in matters of religion; his not falling in with the received and prevailing notions of those times, his avowing and openly propagating the gospel of Christ. The danger of suffering could not restrain him from preaching this, as long as he had his liberty: Nor could his sufferings, when they came upon him, in the least deject him, or make him repent of what he had done, or think of any other course when ever he should again obtain his liberty. And when the

Sermon the *Heathens* were at so great uncertainty in matters of religion, could they avoid inquiring what **XIII.** that religion was that animated men to such resolution and constancy; and made them defy all dangers, and in a manner choose suffering and trouble? Now this very inquiry that his bonds occasion'd, was a considerable furtherance of the gospel. One great reason why men did not believe the gospel, was because they would not give it a fair hearing. A wretched indifference and carelessness, with respect to matters of truth and religion, commonly prevails among men. They are willing to take it for granted, without giving themselves the trouble of looking into the reasons of things, that the principles they imbibed in their youth, the religion of their country, which has descended to them from their ancestors, is true. If men would but take the pains to examine, they could not long avoid the discovering the unreasonableness of those religious principles which are grossly false; nor could they fail of perceiving the excellency of the true religion, when they had an opportunity of knowing the nature of it. The gospel of Christ is a scheme of religion that will bear the most curious and critical examination; and the more thoroughly 'tis consider'd, the more will it approve it self to the reason and conscience of men. Assuredly therefore, whatever occasions a careful and diligent inquiry into the nature of the gospel, must of necessity be a furtherance of it. And this was the happy effect of St. Paul's bonds: *The things, says he, which happen'd unto me, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel: So that my bonds in (or for) Christ, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.* And had not this, do we think, a good effect in all

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all those places? Was it not an advantage for the spreading the christian religion in them? Sermon XIII.

Judge of the other places by what 'tis reasonable to imagine concerning the *palace*, or *Cesar's court*, as our margin renders it, or the *camp*, as others understand it. Certainly this was one thing that occasion'd his remarkable salutation in the conclusion of his epistle, chap. iv. 21. *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household.* His bonds then occasion'd the very courtiers to look into his affair; and the consequence was, that there were soon *saints* or christians to be found even among them, with a salutation from whom he could therefore grace his epistles to the *Philippians*.

5. Another advantage, or furtherance of the gospel, which we may suppose to be owing to his bonds, was that they occasion'd his cause to be more thoroughly consider'd; and this approving it self to the consciences of the inquirers, and especially to persons of figure, those about *Cesar*, did lessen the number, and abate the fury and violence of the enemies of christianity; and so made it less hazardous for ministers to preach, and people to imbrace the gospel. *St. Paul*, as an apostle, was a prime minister of the gospel; and his fervent zeal and abundant labours had render'd him a very remarkable person, in the world as well as the church. And the bonds of such an one would move the curiosity of many more, than those of an ordinary christian, or an ordinary minister. And as this not only lessen'd the number of their enemies, and increased that of their friends, and especially as it procured them friends among persons of figure and interest, it blunted the edge of the persecution, and so gave a fairer opportunity for spreading the gospel. And

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And thus I have done with the explication of the text; all that remains is,

III. That I endeavour to improve what has been said to our own comfort in our present circumstances. I do not pretend that our case is exactly parallel to that which is mention'd in the text. Thanks be to God, we are not in bonds, however desirous some have shewn themselves that they might see us in that condition. If in other respects we compare our case with *St. Paul's*, no impartial person can, I think, blame us. I question whether our load of reproach be much less than his: If it is, the difference must be owing to the superior genius of that time in inventing calumnies, and not to the modesty or good temper of our own; for, as far as I can see, their wit and invention has been upon the stretch; and while they have said all manner of evil concerning us, if there was room for their saying worse, it certainly must be attributed to the barrenness of their invention, rather than to any want of a good will to the brave employment. 'Tis evident we have been *made the filth and off-scouring of the world*; and the most senseless and palpable lies have been industriously invented, and greedily imbraced by our enemies. And if slanders and reproaches are our only trouble, we have great reason to thank a good God, who suffers not our enemies to have power to go any farther.

There is one thing wherein our trouble very much resembles that of the apostle, *viz.* That a great part of it proceeds from our brethren; for God forbid that we should disown their being such, or that we should here treat them as they do us. All good men are brethren, however peevish some of them may be; and as

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good christians, we should put the most charitable construction upon their actions. The actions themselves we cannot but condemn; but we should even stretch our charity, rather than not suppose that ignorance does alleviate their guilt. We may bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, though not according to knowledge. And we must have taken little notice of their conduct, if we have not been sensible, that they are weak enough to be easily transported by a warm and mistaken zeal, which we should both hope and pray they may at length come to repent of.

But it shall not be my aim to enlarge on our troubles. 'Tis true, no man has more right to do it than my self, as no man has had a greater share in them; but 'tis needless, since, as *Solomon* says, *Prov. xiv. 10. The heart knoweth its own bitterness.* And our complaint will hardly move the compassion of those who are not already touch'd with a sense of that reproach, contempt, and vile usage we have met with. My endeavour shall be to follow the example of the apostle, and to divert you from poring upon the melancholy and dark side of your trouble, and to open to you a more bright and pleasing scene; to ingage you to consider the happy account to which these things which have happen'd to us, already do, and in all likelihood will yet more and more turn. For *I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happen'd to us, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.* And I shall now therefore lay before you some instances, wherein I apprehend they have done so. And here I only desire it may be remember'd through the whole, that whatever advances any part of the gospel,

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gospel, or any thing that properly belongs to it, ought to be esteem'd, and may therefore be justly called a furtherance of the gospel. It cannot indeed be denied, that the things that have happen'd to us, have been in some respects a hinderance to the gospel. The animosities which have been raised, and the prejudices which have been artfully and industriously instill'd into many against the ministers who had, and might have still, been useful among them, the diverting people from regarding, with their chief care, the practical part of religion; these, and some other things, are doubtless a considerable hinderance to the gospel. Such offences are declared to be a *woe* to the world; and thanks be to God that I have had no hand in their coming: While others are chargeable with the evils that have happen'd, God has turn'd what has befallen us to the furtherance of the gospel, and that in the following instances.

1. I take what has happen'd to us to have fallen out very much to the furtherance of true proper gospel worship. If I am able to understand any thing of my bible, the true scheme of christian worship, there deliver'd, is that of worshiping the one only living and true God, through Jesus Christ the one only Mediator, by the assistance of the one Spirit. That honour and worship is to be paid to Christ is past doubt with us, as I am apt to think 'tis with all that call themselves christians; but still all that honour and worship is to be paid to him as mediator; and ought to terminate on that God with whom he mediates. If we may take our Saviour's word, *the true worshippers*, in the times of the gospel, were to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 23. Our coming, according to

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to the apostle, is to be *to God*, but *by Christ*, Sermon
Heb. vii. 25. And in general, the method of XIII.
 christian worship is summarily deliver'd by the
 apostle, *Eph. ii. 18.* *For through him [Christ]*
we both [Jews and Gentiles] have an access by one
spirit unto the Father. This notion and scheme of
 christian worship is so obvious in the new testa-
 ment, that it has generally prevailed; nor was
 it ever heard of, I believe, till lately, and here
 in our learned part of the world, that we are
 to pray to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 through the Son the mediator; or that the Son
 was to be consider'd as a mediator between him-
 self and sinners; or that we are to bless the
 Father, Son, and Spirit for sending his [or ra-
 ther, if they would speak properly, *their*] Son,
 and pray that he would give us his spirit. That
 this is not such worship as the gospel directs,
 is I think evident from hence, that the gospel
 never represents Christ as the Son of any other
 than the Father: No man can there discover
 any such absurdity as that the Son is the son
 of himself, or that the Spirit is the spirit of
 himself.

They that find fault with us, are not able to
 deny that our worship is agreeable to the chri-
 stian doctrine; but 'tis strange they should avow
 a worship so utterly destitute of all foundation
 therein. And if I mistake not, the things that
 have happen'd unto us, have fallen out rather
 to the furtherance of the gospel in this respect.
 You are sensible that after this manner I have
 all along chosen to order my worship among
 you. This was done peaceably and quietly for
 a long time, without any one's pretending to
 be offended at it. But when the spirit of con-
 tention began to work, what was innocent be-
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Sermon fore, came to be much censur'd and condemn'd;

XIII. and the great aim and design was utterly to put us down, that such a constant adherence to the scripture worship might be effectually stopt. For this end were we denied any place of worship, and they who drove us into an obscure and inconvenient corner, took that advantage of insulting both us and our worship. But thro' the good providence of God, who has raised up a noble and generous spirit in a few persons, the contempt our neighbours treated us with before, is now turn'd to envy. We are now got out of our dark corner, and are not like *a candle put under a bed or a bushel*, that I may allude to our Lord's words, but like *a candle set upon a candlestick, or a city set upon a hill*. And the men who thought to disgrace us, have rather made us conspicuous, as they have, though in a very bad way, been the occasion of our being the first congregation who openly declare for the true worship of the gospel; and thro' the good hand of our God have we now an house built to his honour, which our worst enemies cannot condemn, and wherein none need be ashamed to appear and join with us. And what has been done to disgrace our worship, has at length fallen out to the honour of it. And let me, by the way, say for the encouragement and comfort of those upon whom the burden has lain; and who have yet, however heavy, chearfully gone thro' with it, that what they have done in the integrity of their hearts for God's honour, is taken kindly by him at their hands. And I pray God that their zeal in building an house for him may be abundantly recompensed to them by his blessing their houses, as he did of old that of *Obededom*, and by giving them a part in

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in the building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Sermon
XIII.

2. The things that have happen'd unto us, have, I verily believe, fallen out to the discouragement of persecution, and so to the furtherance of the liberty which the gospel secures to us. There is nothing more contrary to the spirit of the gospel than persecution; nor is there the least word to be found therein in favour of it. Compulsion is indeed prescribed, but 'tis manifest that 'tis only by reason and argument; but the way of reviling and reproaching men, the injuring them in their temporal property, or the executing of any penal laws against them, for the sake merely of their consciences, is as contrary to the gospel as darkness to light.

And farther, according to the gospel, every man's own conscience is his immediate guide and director; nor are we to subject our understandings to the direction or authority of any man, or body of men upon earth. As christians we are the servants of Christ, and him only are we to own as our master; we are call'd unto liberty, and ought not in matters of religion, and the things of God, to be the servants of men. We are not here to take things upon trust, and to act with an implicit faith, but to see with our own eyes; and that man invades our christian liberty who would pretend to insist upon our making any thing an article of faith, or our submitting to any thing as a term of communion, which God has not expressly revealed, or plainly commanded.

That a violent attempt has been made upon our christian liberty, is, I think, notorious to all the world; nor will those that made it, with any consistency, be able to deny it, when they

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consider in what manner they used both to think and speak of the like usage from the establish'd church. For without all doubt they have as much right to demand our assent to thirty nine articles of human compofure, as others can pretend to have to require it to one. We counted it our unhappiness, but I can't help saying that 'tis our great honour, that we were called to bear the first shock; and make the first stand, as it were, against this incroachment. The onset has been indeed violent; but thanks be to God we have not been daunted, or given way hitherto.

And is not this a furtherance of the gospel? Had we behaved with less firmness, when the providence of God called us to this service, had we tamely given up our christian liberty, and our consciences to those who fought them, how would not only they, but those of the same spirit every where, have triumphed in the success, and gone on most heroically with the wonderful exploit? Whereas the disappointment and shame they have reaped from their management, has been, I am persuaded, a curb upon such; and I am not without hope, that as we are the first, we shall likewise be the last example of such violent proceedings; and our sufferings will become a means of many others being left to think the more freely. You know very well what a noble stand has been made for christian liberty, by our brethren in the metropolis of the kingdom: You cannot be insensible how very great a furtherance that is to the gospel; and I may well say, that whatever advantage that has, or may prove, it has been occasion'd by the things which have happen'd to us.

3. I can't but think that the things which have happen'd unto us, have fallen out to the furtherance of the charity required by the gospel. I must own, and every one would be sensible of it if I did not, that the law of charity, a fundamental duty of the gospel, has been very much broken upon this occasion; while those who have oppos'd us have not only broken all measures of love, kindness, and even common civility with us, but have likewise taken upon them rashly to censure our state, representing us as holding damnable opinions, and denying the Lord that bought us. It may therefore seem strange, that I should reckon that has any tendency to further charity, which has occasion'd so great a breach of it. But when the matter is rightly stated, I hope we shall have a different view of it. The breach of charity we have seen, however it has discover'd it self upon this occasion, has been owing to the uncharitable principles which have been long inculcated, and have taken deep root in mens minds. People have been taught to lay the stress of mens salvation upon their believing a doctrine which is no where expressly revealed, and which no one that I can find pretends to understand. This has been the true mischievous cause of that uncharitableness which was bound up in mens hearts before, and has now taken the advantage of breaking forth. But the things that have happen'd unto us, have led us to strike at the very root of this mischief. We have openly made a stand against this censorious and uncharitable temper; we have, and do declare against mens judging one another's state upon the account of any difference about such opinions. And it would be strange, if they who plead for christian liberty, should

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Sermon not at the same time be friends to charity ; it
 XIII. being only a stingy notion of the former, that
 occasions, in this case, the breach of the latter.
 And as 'tis evident we have not acted against
 the great gospel rule of charity, by judging any
 man for differing from us ; so I am not with-
 out hope that we have been an occasion to many
 who were before disposed to judge uncharita-
 bly, to consider things more calmly, and to
 come to a much better and more christian tem-
 per.

4. The things that have happen'd unto us
 have been for the furtherance of the gospel,
 as the rule of mens faith and practice. One
 would think, when God has given us a revela-
 tion from himself, and declared it to be *able to*
make us wise unto salvation, to be a perfect rule
 both of truth and duty, that such as receive this
 revelation should be contented therewith ; and
 not set up any other rule for themselves or
 others. But we see how prone men have been
 to act quite otherwise. How commonly, in for-
 mer times, were the creeds of councils made
 the standard of the christian faith ! And we
 find by the management of the disputes which
 arose in the second and third centuries, concern-
 ing the time of keeping *Easter*, and the bap-
 tism of hereticks, that unscriptural traditions
 began very early to be pleaded as a warrant
 or rule among christians. The papists to this
 day build a great part of their religion upon
 them ; and finding them to be so serviceable
 to their cause, the holy scriptures are little re-
 garded by them ; nay, they utterly deny them
 to be a compleat and perfect rule in themselves,
 without the church to fix the sense of them.
 One would have thought, that the protestants,

who have been opposing the papists upon this Sermon point for these two hundred years, should have kept themselves free from all blame about it. XIII.

But it seems the controversy is not whether the church is to fix the sense of the scriptures, but which is the church that has a right to do it; and protestant synods and assemblies may do that which popish councils may not; articles, confessions, and catechisms have been set up as the standards of truth, to the disparagement of the scriptures, to which alone that honour is due. And how much the scriptures are out of date with these men, we may perceive by the method of their proceedings. The scriptures give us a plain and express rule, that *against an elder an accusation is not to be received, but before two or three witnesses*, 1 Tim. v. 19. And this is agreeable to all rules of justice. But however it might serve for the apostles days, 'tis not thought very proper to be regarded in ours; and therefore a new way, never heard of in the primitive church, has been substituted in its room; and we, as 'tis now manifest to all the world, have been proceeded against by an *Inquisition*.

Farther, when men have been at a loss for scripture to support their assertions, they have had recourse to tradition, and the long possession that the church has had of a doctrine; and we are required to take things for truth upon the prescription of ages past, and out of a respectful deference to the sense and judgment of our ancestors. The case was much the same formerly among the *Jews*, who beside the written law pretended they had a traditionary law handed down to them from *Moses*, that obliged them to many things which were not mentioned in the written law. The ceremonial law which

Sermon was written, was a yoke severe enough ; but
 XIII. this was a vast addition to the severity and bondage of that dispensation. The apostle calls this *their vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers* ; and he calls it a *vain conversation*, for the same reason as our Saviour told the *Jews* that they *in vain* pretended to worship God by these things, *Matt. xv. 9.* the worship which is built upon the command of men, and not upon the command of God, is vain worship. Now the apostle informs us that it was the design of the Son of God to redeem the *Jews* from this vain conversation by his precious blood, *1 Pet. i. 18, 19.* *Ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ.* And certainly he that died to redeem the *Jews* from such a *vain conversation*, could have no design that his followers should in times to come receive such another by tradition from their fathers. Length of time, wherein a tradition has been received, makes no difference in the case. In all religious matters we are to have recourse to the original institution, and to consider, as our Saviour has taught us, how it was in the beginning. And they who boast of the opinion of fourteen centuries, will do well to consider, that the *Jews* were confident in boasting of more in behalf of that vain conversation, from which Christ died to redeem them.

I think 'tis manifest that we have avowed the scripture to be the only rule, in opposition to whatever men have endeavour'd to substitute in the room of it. Nor do I see how we could in a more noble way attest this to the world, than
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that which we have taken ; I mean our chearful suffering, because we will submit to no other. And I make no doubt, that God has made our constancy and sufferings a means of furthering the gospel, as it has occasion'd many to abate of their excessive regard to human composures, and to pay a greater deference and regard to the holy scriptures as the only standard of all revealed truth and duty.

5. The things which have happen'd to us have a good tendency to advance the reputation and credit of the gospel in the world. No greater disservice can be done to the christian religion, than by representing it as absurd and inconsistent in its doctrines. I am fully satisfied that the gospel teaches a religion most agreeable to the perfections of God, and the nature and fallen condition of mankind ; and that it must commend it self to the conscience of every one who will seriously examine it, being free from the influence of strong prejudices, and fleshly lusts. But whoever desires to understand it, ought to learn it from the bible, where the faith and obedience it requires are deliver'd in a plain and easy manner, that does not exceed the weakest capacity, though proper to satisfy the strongest. Christianity is to be seen in its native purity and true perfection, as 'tis deliver'd in the gospel it self ; when men attempted to adorn and beautify it by mixing opinions of the several sects of philosophers, and especially the jargon of the schoolmen with it, they really corrupted it. And the truth is, that the most beautiful and orderly scheme of religion in the world, was by degrees changed to an heap of mystery and confusion ; and those parcels of truth (as I may call them) that were retain'd
in

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Sermon in the *Romish* church, lost their proper lustre,

XIII. by their being buried in a vast heap of rubbish.

Nor has any thing been a greater scandal and offence to *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, or more harden'd them in their prejudices against our holy religion, nor has any thing more promoted deism and infidelity in christian countries, than the mysteries which men have invented, and which they would have people believe are the most important points of the gospel, though they are not to be found there. And can there be any doubt that we have taken a proper course to remove mens prejudices, and reconcile them to the gospel, when, though we approve our selves as hearty friends as any to the christian religion, yet we thus openly declare, that we count not the devices of men which are principally objected against it, as any part of our religion? In short, we are consistent with our selves; we declare we take the scriptures for our only rule, and therefore we disclaim all the other rules men would set up in competition with them: We plead that every man has a right to judge for himself, and therefore we endeavour to discard all implicit faith: We judge that God only has a jurisdiction over mens consciences, and therefore we neither claim any our selves, nor do we submit to any when claim'd by others. And in all things I hope we keep, I am confident we desire and endeavour to keep, to the principles we profess as christians, protestants, and dissenters.

6. The things that have happen'd to us occasion christians looking more carefully into the grounds and reasons of their faith, which is certainly a considerable furtherance of the gospel. The principles of the christian doctrine

are

are taught us when we are young, if we are Sermon
XIII.
so happy as to have a truly christian education.

But then our tender minds are not capable of perceiving much of the reasons and evidences of things, and we take them upon trust from them that teach us: But though 'tis allowable for us to think and speak as children, while we are children, yet when we become men, 'tis time for us to put away childish things. We ought then to examine the principles we have received, and to see that we build upon good and solid grounds. This men are apt enough to do in other matters; but a slothful negligence and carelessness about religion, which deserves to be seriously minded above all things, makes men easily take what they have been told in their infancy for granted; and so their faith stands in the wisdom of men, and rests upon their authority, and not upon the testimony of God.

It cannot be supposed but the great noise that has been made concerning us, has made many to look more narrowly into the reasons of their faith; and let the consequence of a serious, diligent, and sincere inquiry be either the fixing a man in his former opinion, or a conviction of his mistake, he may be satisfied that he takes the proper course, and that his faith shall be the more acceptable and pleasing to God. And whether men preach Christ of contention or of good will, I doubt not it shall occasion many to search the scriptures the more carefully, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Nor do I think we have been altogether unserviceable to the truth, in as much as what we have suffer'd, has occasion'd some with the more freedom and boldness to own and appear for it.

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XIII.



I shall close all with three reflections. briefly.

1. Since the things that have happen'd to us have certainly fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, and have served so excellent and noble a purpose, let none of us grudge or repine at what we have met with. Who would not be willing to bear reproach upon such an account? we should bless God when he is pleased to honour us with being any way serviceable to him, to his Son, to his interest and truth. And though cruel mockings are no light trial, yet I must tell you they are much lighter than what God might have called us to, and what as christians we have bound our selves to be ready to indure, and what many of God's servants have indured ; *for ye have not yet resisted unto blood.*

And christians are to be prepared not only to bear reproach, but to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Equivalent to this is the depriving you of your just right, and the obliging you to expend a part of your substance, which had been needless if you had been justly dealt with. But I need not enlarge upon this ; the place you have built for the worship of God is a witness that you have not grudg'd what you have done ; but have taken joyfully the spoiling of your goods, since you have voluntarily exceeded in the expence, and provided not barely for necessity, but for an agreeable decency and comeliness.

2. Since our sufferings are causeless, and yet so serviceable for the furtherance of the gospel, there can be no good reason why any should be ashamed to own us, and join with us. The reproaches cast upon us are for the sake of Christ, his truth, his authority ; and if *Moses's* faith is

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worthy of our imitation, we should esteem these *Sermon*
greater riches than the treasures of a kingdom. *XIII.*

All that we contend for, is that we may have
no master but one, even Christ, that the words of
men may be no rule to us, while all the words
of Christ we most chearfully receive and believe.
Let men therefore seriously consider those awful
words of our Saviour, Mark viii. 38. *Whosoever*
shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this
adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall
the son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the
glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

3. Since God has done us the honour to turn
the things that have happen'd to us to the fur-
therance of the gospel, let us be very careful,
that we do not hinder the promotion and ad-
vancement of it any other way. The eyes of
the world, my brethren, are upon us; the re-
putation of truth and liberty will be served or
diserved by our behaviour. Let us see then that
we credit both, by our meekness and mildness,
bearing patiently, as I hope we have hitherto,
the insults and abuses which affect not us only,
but Christ, the master we profess to serve. Let
us be most exact and circumspect in our whole
conduct, and be holy in all manner of conver-
sation. A drunkard, an extortioner, a cheat,
or an unclean person may disgrace, but he will
not be able to do much to the furtherance of
the gospel. Let it be seen by our lives, that
we are *seeking for glory, honour, and immortality.*
This will be the most convincing confutation of
the damning sentences which men may pass up-
on us. Let not our religion lie in speculation
or in talk, but in practice; and with the form
of godliness let us join the life and power thereof.
If we take this course, we may expect that
God

366 *The Sufferings of the Apostle, &c.*

Sermon God will honour us as we honour him ; we
XIII. shall surmount the opposition we meet with ;
by our patience and innocence weary our re-
vilers, and triumph over all their weak attempts ;
we shall effectually make them ashamed who
blame our good conversation in Christ, and put
to silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Amen.*
God grant it for Christ's sake.

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*How St. Paul was known to be set for
the Defence of the Gospel.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd

MAY 8, 1720.

PHILIP. I. 17.

*But the other of Love, knowing that I
am set for the Defence of the Gospel.*

TIS a great unhappiness among chri-
stians, that they are so little able
to bear with one another in the
differing sentiments they entertain;
and that party strife and contention so commonly
drown love and charity among those who may
be, perhaps all of them, diligently and impar-
tially searching for the truth. No one that
makes any careful observation of the behaviour
of the several parties into which christians are
now sadly divided, can fail of taking notice of
the zeal with which differences in religion are
inflamed.

Sermon inflamed. Nothing is more common than to
 XIV. see the fierce zealots, in a religious contro-
 versy, magnify the weight and importance
 of the tenet they are fond of: And let it be
 ever so whimsical, absurd, or trifling, 'tis great
 odds if it does not soon commence a fundamen-
 tal, and the stress of mens eternal salvation be
 not laid upon it. 'Tis great pity religion should
 be used as a means of sowing mens tempers,
 and rendering them morose, surly, and uneasy
 to those about them. One would think it should
 be no hard matter for persons to believe, that
 their neighbours, who live soberly and virtu-
 ously, may be very sincere and impartial in
 their seeking the truth, however they may hap-
 pen to disagree with them in the judgments
 they form. We all, for instance, profess our
 selves Christians, and declare that we take the
 bible for the rule of our faith and practice, and
 that we endeavour to frame all our notions ac-
 cording to that: And while we do not by a
 neglect of the christian rules of piety and virtue,
 destroy the credibility of our profession, why
 may we not obtain the favour at the hands of
 men to be thought honest and sincere, and such
 as may be accepted of God? Why should men,
 who pretend to sense as well as religion, indulge
 themselves in a vain cant, and call all their pe-
 culiar fancies *gospel*, and every contrary opinion
 a *damnable heresy*? Why must the sacred scrip-
 tures, the words of the Holy Ghost, which de-
 serve to be treated with the highest veneration,
 be tortured to condemn, or establish what they
 speak not of? There is nothing more easy than
 for men to make the scriptures assert what they
 please, if they may but first be allow'd to in-
 title their own notions true gospel. But as no
 opinion

opinion can be justly establish'd, or solidly Sermon
confuted, by such a precarious application of any XIV.
text, without proving the relation it has to that
opinion; so nothing is more weak and childish
than such a way of arguing from any general
term, which may be equally applied by all parties
to their respective purposes, till the sense
of it be determin'd by other plain evidence.

When once a man takes it for granted, that
his opinion is gospel, he immediately triumphs
in the application of any text wherein mention
is made of the gospel. And by this means all
the rage of a party shall be justified as though
it were for the defence of the gospel.

I have now chosen to insist upon this text, that
I may rescue it from the sinister interpretation put
upon it by such as catch at the sound, rather
than search for the true sense and meaning of it.

St. Paul informs the *Philippians*, at the 12th
verse of the chapter, that *the things which hap-*
pen'd unto him, had fallen out rather to the fur-
therance of the gospel; that is, that his bonds and
imprisonment had been the occasion of the greater
spread of the gospel. This was owing partly
to mens curiosity, which naturally puts them
upon inquiring into the reasons and causes of
things; and so it being notorious that the
apostle's sufferings were for the sake of the gos-
pel, this occasion'd mens inquiring what this
gospel was for which he suffer'd; the happy
effect of which was what may easily be supposed
concerning such a rational institution; that it
approved it self to the minds and consciences
of all impartial inquirers. Again, the advan-
tage which the gospel gain'd by his bonds was
partly owing to the effect it had upon the
preachers of that time, as it provoked their

Sermon zeal, diligence, and courage in the discharge of
 XIV. their duty. This is mention'd, *ver. 14.* And

many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Upon his mentioning this, he takes occasion to observe the very different behaviour of two sorts of preachers at that time, *ver. 15.* *Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife; and some also of good-will.* St. Paul himself was the object of the envy of the one, and of the love of the other, as he shews by what follows: *The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.* They preach'd Christ with a design of opposing the apostle, being grieved at the reputation and interest he had gain'd, and endeavouring to undermine him; and by this means to add to the trouble of his bonds by vexing and grieving his spirit. Of the other, which were the truly generous and noble sort, he speaks in the words of the text: *But the other of love, that is love and good-will to the apostle, as may appear not only by the 15th verse, but likewise by the last clause of the text, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.*

Some think the words should rather be render'd, *knowing that I lie, that is in bonds, for the defence of the gospel.* The sense would be very good, if the words were so understood: But as I doubt whether the expression in the original would bear that rendering, and our own may be justified from several other places, particularly 1 Thess. iii. 3. *Your selves know that we are appointed thereunto:* I think there is no need of making any alteration in our translation. They knew therefore that he was *set*, that is, *appointed*, for the defence of the gospel. And the appoint-

be set for the Defence of the Gospel. 371

appointment he speaks of, must be understood
to be the appointment of God or of Christ. Sermon XIV.

In speaking to the words, I will,

- I. Consider how they could know that St. *Paul* was set, or appointed of God, for the defence of the gospel.
- II. Inquire how far we can have reason to apprehend the same to be true or false concerning any in our own time.

I. I am to consider how those who preach'd Christ out of love and good-will to St. *Paul*, could know that he was set, or appointed of God, for the defence of the gospel. And certainly we may well suppose there was somewhat peculiar in his case, and which he may therefore be understood here to refer to.

1. They were apprized of his being in an extraordinary and immediate manner called to the highest office in the christian church. The apostles were the prime and chief ministers in the church, with whom no others were to be compared; and one thing that seems to have been necessary for the constituting an apostle, was that he should be immediately appointed by Christ, without the intervention of men. And hence as St. *Paul* was immediately and extraordinarily called to this office after our Saviour's death, he takes notice of this particular circumstance; *Gal. i. 1. Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.* Now 'tis but reasonable to suppose that they who are unquestionably called and appointed of God to the highest office in the christian church, are appointed by him also to the chief and

Sermon most important services. They are in a particular manner put in trust with the gospel, XIV. 1 Thess. ii. 4. *We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.* And must not this be one part of the trust, that they defend it? Thus he tells us elsewhere, 1 Tim. i. 2. *The glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust.*

2. They knew he was extraordinarily instructed and furnished for the defence of the gospel, as well as by his office called and appointed to it. When God sends men upon any work, he qualifies them for it. And as the apostles were in a particular manner intrusted with the gospel, so they had extraordinary qualifications for the discharge of that trust. And there is one qualification which is manifestly necessary for him who is set for the defence of the gospel, and with which the apostles were furnish'd above all others; and that is a thorough knowledge of the gospel they were to defend. Without this they would have been very unfit for the errand they were sent upon, to set up a new religion in the world. But being furnish'd with an extraordinary illumination of the Holy Spirit, and by him being *led into all truth*, they were able to *declare the whole counsel of God*, and with an infallible assurance publish to the world the doctrine they preached. It would have been a great disgrace and hindrance to the gospel, had the first publishers of it discover'd themselves to be uncertain or inconsistent in the preaching of it. They might then have been easily puzzled and nonplus'd by the cunning sophisters of the age. But they were secured against this by the exact and full knowledge they had of that gospel which they were to defend as well as publish. *God made them able ministers of the new testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 4.

3. The

3. The signs and miracles which God wrought by St. Paul were a full evidence of his apostle-ship, and by consequence of his being set for the defence of the gospel. It was not sufficient to satisfy the world that the apostles brought a well laid and consistent scheme of doctrine ; there was need of some clear evidence that the things they declared were actually true. Supposing the doctrine they publish'd was rational ; yet its being so was not alone enough to prove that God had sent them to make it known, or that it must be received on pain of eternal damnation. They came as *ambassadors of Christ*, and as *though God did beseech men by them, they pray'd them in his stead*. Was it not therefore necessary that they should be able to produce their commission, and shew that it was well attested, and that they asserted nothing but what they had good warrant for ? This the apostles were able to do by those extraordinary works which they perform'd ; nor had any christians or ministers of that time an equal measure of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost with them. And thus we read particularly of this apostle, *Acts xix. 11, 12. God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul : So that from his body were brought to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them*. And thus God bore witness to these first preachers of the gospel both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, *Heb. ii. 4*. By such extraordinary operations, both the commission and doctrine of St. Paul were attested and confirm'd to the world ; nor could any thing but harden'd impudence stand against such a defence of the gospel ; it being

Sermon evident the doctrine must be from God, which
 XIV. God is pleased in so plain a manner to set his
 seal to.

4. There seems to have been somewhat very peculiar in the providence of God, with reference to *St. Paul*, as though even among the apostles themselves, he had been more eminently set for the defence of the gospel. Notwithstanding all the apostles were equal as to their office, they were not all equal in other respects; but some of them were more eminent than others. Our Saviour, in his life time, by his behaviour in taking *Peter*, *James*, and *John* only with him upon extraordinary occasions, seems to have distinguish'd them from the rest; and afterwards they were *reputed pillars*, Gal. ii. 9. And thus *St. Paul* speaks of the *very chiefest apostles*, 2 Cor. xi. 5. And in the same place tells us, he was *not a whit behind* them. And if we consider the extraordinary resolution and courage he discover'd, the indefatigable industry and pains he took in preaching the gospel, the many sufferings he indured for the sake of it; and the frequent publick defences he made of it in the presence of its greatest enemies, we may well acknowledge there was somewhat peculiar in his case which might make those who were acquainted with the history of his life, think him above any of his fellow apostles set for the defence of the gospel. Providence seems to have mark'd him out as the person by whom the gospel should be more defended than by any other; at least the accounts which are left us, do not inform us of any one who did so much in defence of the gospel as he did.

Upon the whole therefore, the preachers
St. Paul speaks of might know that he was set
 for

for the defence of the gospel, since they had full evidence of his commission as an apostle, and might plainly perceive that providence led him more than any of the rest of the apostles to defend the gospel by his preaching, writings, and sufferings. Sermon XIV.

II. I shall now inquire how far we can have reason to apprehend the same to be true or false, concerning any in our own time; that they also are set by God for the defence of the gospel. Now here I desire it may be observed, that the inquiry I make, is not whose duty 'tis to defend the gospel. There can no question be made of its being the duty of all who believe the gospel, and profess themselves christians, to defend it in the best way they are capable. Private christians are obliged to this, and much more such as are ministers in the christian church are obliged in duty, not only to preach the gospel, but to vindicate it, and put to silence gainlayers. But the question here is, when we can have reason to think that God does now design, and particularly imploy and appoint any persons to this province of defending the gospel? And this is the more needful to be consider'd, because 'tis so common for men to cover their zeal with a pretence of their concern for the gospel, and their being set for the defence of it. Now I will comprize all I shall say on this head under these following particulars:

1. That we are not to think men set for the defence of the gospel, but upon our having the clearest evidence and proof that what they defend is really gospel. There is nothing more apt to mislead and deceive men, than when they take up any thing for gospel, not because they see it proved to be so, but because they

Sermon are confidently told by those they too much rely
XIV. upon that 'tis so.

~~~~ Sometimes we see men are apt to rely upon their teachers, because of their ordination; as tho' those who were ordain'd by such and such persons, or in such and such a manner, must needs be intrusted with the keeping of the truth, and be the defenders of the gospel. 'Tis true, were men now, as of old, immediately sent of God, or did their ordainers now proceed by a spirit of discerning, and so separate none to the sacred office but those whom God called to it, there would be more reason for our placing a confidence in them.

But the case is far otherwise; and the ordainers, of whatever side they be, are liable to be mistaken, and to send those whom God does not call or esteem duly qualified: And they are innocent many times in doing so; since God has not given them ability to look into the hearts of men, and therefore expects no more of them than to judge according to appearance. The ordainers therefore may proceed according to rule, and yet send forth such as God does not send or approve; and to be sure in this case he does not set them for the defence of the gospel. The best men, when they proceed most exactly according to rule, may send the worst, being mistaken concerning them; and the best of men, and those whom God will make most use of for the defence of his gospel, may happen sometimes to be ordain'd, or sent by the worst. And this is evident among all parties, as I speak not with regard to any one party in opposition to another. 'Tis evident therefore that we can't judge of the doctrine now by the persons that bring it, however they may come recommended to us. And indeed should we judge according to  
this



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this rule, we must be reduced to the utmost confusion: For let a man fix upon what party he will, he shall find them disagree among themselves, some of them recommending that for gospel which others cry down as heresy.

Sermon  
XIV.

Nor again can we take any thing to be gospel upon a trust to numbers. A doctrine is not presently gospel, because it has the common vogue, and the generality of those who profess the christian religion fall in with it; or because the major part of fallible ministers, whether they are or are not assembled in council, declare for it, and earnestly recommend it as such. Neither the people, nor the ministers of the christian church, have any infallible assurance of their being always in the right; and in fact we find the majority of either, or both sorts, have many times been in the wrong.

Were this a rule of judging, a reformation of corruptions must be humanly speaking impossible. For how should it be begun when the corruption, as in the times of popery, is become general? You must either suppose that God should by a miracle work a conviction at once in the majority; or else the thing is not feasible: For whatever a few persons may offer, and however strong, clear, and unanswerable their reasons may be, they may easily be born down with this pretence, if it be allowed to have any sense in it, that the majority are against them; and 'tis to be suppos'd that they are in the right.

We must therefore first know what is gospel, before we can have reason to judge that men who undertake the defence of it, are set for the defence of the gospel. And this we must learn from quite another rule than the opinions  
and

Sermon and judgments of men. This must indeed be  
 XIV. learnt from the gospel it self.

The gospel is to be understood in different senses ; sometimes it signifies the glad tidings of a Saviour, and sometimes 'tis taken more largely, as comprehending the whole christian revelation, whatever by the new testament we are required to believe and practise. In the first sense 'tis to be hoped that all the contending parties of christians are agreed in their belief and defence of the gospel, being persuaded that Jesus of *Nazareth* is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and that there is salvation in no other name but his. This is evidently gospel, and he that defends this, so far defends the gospel. But taking the gospel in a more large and extensive sense, as comprehending the whole rule of christian faith and practice, 'tis certain there is a considerable difference among those who bear the name of christians ; some judging and recommending that as gospel which others can by no means receive as such.

Now would we know who of the contenders defend the gospel, and who do not ; the only way that I can think of to be sure, is to examine the several positions which are advanced, by that revelation which is confessed on both hands to be the rule by which we are to determine. Indeed I can't but think that what is truly gospel, and absolutely necessary to be received by us as such, is laid down very plainly in the new testament ; and may be easily understood without any great matter of logick or metaphysics, or a long train of consequences. But however, since we must look upon our selves as bound to receive whatever we see does naturally flow from any scripture assertions, when ever men prove  
 any



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any of their doctrines to be plainly deduced from Scripture, we may then judge they are really, **XIV.** and not imaginarily only, defending the gospel, when they are endeavouring to vindicate those consequences.

I think then 'tis evident, that let mens zeal be ever so great, and their other qualifications ever so excellent, yet I can have no reason to believe they defend the gospel, and much less that God has set them for the defence of the gospel, till by reasons and fair argument they make it plain to my understanding, that the things they so zealously defend are indeed exactly according to the gospel. It can never be, that God has set them up for the defence of the gospel, however they may set up themselves under that pretence, if the points they maintain are not according to the gospel.

2. I can never think that God has set up such men for the defence of the gospel, whose lives are contrary to the rule of the gospel. A man who lives a vicious and ungodly life, may indeed happen to be right in his notions concerning gospel truth; and were not this allow'd, with what party of men could we hope to find the truth, since there is no party of christians that has not some bad men intermix'd among them? But yet certainly, however such men may happen to be in the right, God has never set them for the defence of the gospel, since the tenour of their conversations is a most notorious opposition to it. Men may be innocent in sending forth a drunkard, a lyar, a reviler, or an unclean person, when they are not able to see thro' his disguise, and discern his abominable wickedness: But are such men of God's sending or setting up? Does not he know what they are,

Sermon and how unfit they are to defend the cause,  
 XIV. which they really are concern'd no farther to  
 serve, than as they find it will serve them?

3. We cannot reasonably judge those to be set up for the defence of the gospel, who instead of gospel methods of defending it, betake themselves to those that are notoriously unjust and unrighteous, and most directly contrary to the gospel. When men pretend to be set up for the defence of the gospel, 'tis common, as we see, for them to justify all they do, as done for that cause. But does God, do we think, ever need the help of injustice and unrighteousness? Or does he ever give men a commission to make use of such methods? We have a plain rule of proceeding in all cases: The gospel is to be spread by persuasion, the force of reason and argument; men are not to be bullied into any opinion in religion; and all ecclesiastical proceedings against such as are accused in any respect are to be according to evidence; and the rule that reaches all cases is, that *in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be establish'd*, and an accusation be received. What sorry defenders must they then be of the gospel, who instead of this, set up an *inquisition* to make offenders; and upon their non-submission proceed against them as though they were really such? Does God use to send men to defend his truth by imposing their own tenets upon the belief of men? Or can we think that they who take such courses are set by him for the defence of the gospel? We may assuredly say, that as his word gives no countenance to these methods, so the methods themselves may most deservedly lessen our regard to those who use them. If they are of God, yet undoubtedly not in this

matter:



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matter: If they have the truth on their side, Sermon  
which 'tis very unlikely they have, since that XIV.  
never needs such arts, yet without doubt God  
never sent them by this way to maintain it: And  
however they may defend the gospel in other re-  
spects, in this they disparage it, and subvert the  
most equitable and useful rules of it.

I would not that this should be stretch'd too  
far. I don't think that every little mistake is an  
evidence that God does not imploy men for the  
defence of the gospel. Allowances must be  
made for fallible men, when God is pleased to  
make use of such; and all their just methods  
are not to be censured and condemn'd for the sake  
of a few oversights: But where injustice, cruel-  
ty, and oppression run through the whole de-  
fence of a cause, this must give us quite another  
view of it; nor can it be easy for us to suppose  
that such persons are set for the defence of the  
gospel.

4. When God sets men for the defence of the  
gospel, their zeal will bear a proportion to the  
respective importance of those things of the  
gospel which they defend. If a person who is  
placed in a garrison to defend it, busies himself  
in securing such parts of the fortification as are  
most inaccessible and out of danger, and neg-  
lects others which are weakest, and where the  
enemy may do him most mischief, he shews him-  
self very unfit for his post: And so in like man-  
ner, if mens zeal is carried out in defence of very  
obscure matters, which at best 'tis disputable  
whether they have any truth in them, and at the  
same time they are secure and calm with respect  
to such doctrines as directly tend to weaken mens  
indeavours after holiness and virtue; or if their  
defence

Sermon defence is so wholly and virulently employed  
 XIV. about matters of speculation, as to neglect, or it  
 may be destroy charity ; 'tis evident they are  
 very unfit to be set for the defence of the gospel.  
 And however God may send them in other respects,  
 there is little reason to think he raises them up  
 for any such purpose as they may be apt to pretend.

5. Where persons are really set for the defence of the gospel, they will, if we may judge from St. Paul's example, have an hearty desire of the success of the gospel, and rejoice in any probable means used in order to it. This you see was his temper : There were some preach'd Christ of envy and strife in opposition to him, and to add to the affliction of his bonds, and others preach'd Christ out of love and good-will : Was it then only in the latter that he rejoiced ? No, but as he says in the verse immediately following the text : *What then ? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein rejoice ; yea and will rejoice.*

I am sorry I am able to say there has been of late so much preaching of Christ out of envy and strife : Judge now by the apostle's example, who look most likely to be set for the defence of the gospel ; we who cannot indeed rejoice in any opposition made against what we believe to be the truth, but yet do rejoice, and recommend it to you to rejoice, in the liberty and opportunities our brethren have to preach the great truths of the gospel, and to do good to the souls of men ; or they who have shewed themselves so very uneasy at our having any opportunity to preach at all ; and that notwithstanding we opposed



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posed them not in our preaching, as to that point **Sermon**  
upon which they think fit to lay so great a **XIV.**  
stress.

Lastly, I might add, that where persons are set for the defence of the gospel, they will discover a resolution to bear all things for the sake of the gospel. Such a temper this apostle frequently discovers, and the like I doubt not is always found in such as God in his providence raises up for that purpose at any time. But I do not think it proper to inlarge upon this: For however I might suggest under the last head, that we might, according to that character, pretend, with a better grace than our brethren, to be set for the defence of the gospel; yet I would not be thought so vain as to put in for any thing which sounds so great; 'tis enough for us to say, that we are sure 'tis our duty to do our utmost to defend the gospel, according to the best judgment we can form of it; and we hope if God designs any thing farther concerning us, he will give us such a firmness and resolution, as that none of the things we shall meet with shall be able to move us. And as to our brethren, I need not inlarge on this head upon their account. For 'tis manifest, if they have, as some of them for ought I know may have, such a resolution, yet they have at present no opportunity of shewing it, and therefore it cannot as yet be any argument on their side that they are set for the defence of the gospel.

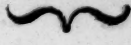
I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. From my discourse you may learn, that the methods men use must justify them, and that their names are not sufficient to justify their  
me-

Sermon methods. Fallible men are liable to mistake in  
 XIV. the course they take, and you can't, from their  
 bare character, be sure they have done well;  
 but if you would judge rightly of that, you  
 must examine and sift their actions themselves.  
 To tell us that a minister, or an assembly is  
 set for the defence of the gospel, that what they  
 have done is for the defence of it, and therefore  
 they are free from blame, is childish. Suppo-  
 sing it were true, and it could be proved, yet  
 who can warrant that they have every way  
 answer'd their character, without being trans-  
 ported by their own affections to such methods  
 as are not good. Shew first that they have  
 acted according to their rule, and then there  
 will be no occasion to fly to such a poor shelter  
 as this.

2. Let none be terrified with such swelling  
 words of vanity. Every thing is not gospel,  
 which some men, who take to themselves the  
 honour of being set for the defence of the gos-  
 pel, will tell you is so. *Try then the spirits*: exa-  
 mine and search, and see if you can find that  
 in your bibles, which they would persuade you  
 is gospel; though they tell you not in what  
 corner of the gospel you are to find it. Believe  
 them not for their own assertion; take nothing  
 for gospel upon trust from them; but see it  
 with your own eyes; and remember that the  
 more unaccountable to reason any doctrine ap-  
 pears to be, the more cause you have to expect  
 it should be frequently, expressly, and in the  
 strongest terms deliver'd in the scriptures, pro-  
 vided God expected you should receive it as  
 such.



3. Let this be a caution to you in reading Sermon  
the holy scriptures, that you carefully observe XIV.  
what any passages or texts therein relate to:   
Otherwise you may be easily misled by those  
who catch at any phrase or expression that seems  
to sound somewhat to their purpose, though it  
be most foreign to the sense of the Holy Ghost.  
There are other mistakes which men run into,  
by applying texts, which speak wholly of the  
apostles and first extraordinary ministers of the  
christian church, to all ministers in succeeding  
ages. But there is one thing which I wonder is  
not observed by those who bring these into party  
disputes; and that is, that such things are e-  
qually liable to be applied by any party among  
christians, if a man has but assurance and weak-  
ness enough to do it. For instance, one man  
takes it for granted that such ministers, or such  
an assembly, are set for the defence of the gos-  
pel, and that therefore all they say is to be re-  
ceived and applauded; but then why may not the  
contrary party as well say, they are set for the  
defence of the gospel, and that the gospel is op-  
posed by the others? And when such general  
expressions have been bandied to and fro ever  
so long, both sides in the end are just as wise  
as they were in the beginning, and not a hair's  
breadth the nearer to the truth.

4. Since God set his apostles, and does doubt-  
less by his providence, though in a lower sense,  
set persons in succeeding ages for the defence of  
the gospel, you may be assured that the gospel  
is a most important thing, and such as requires  
your most careful regard. See then that you  
diligently study it, stedfastly believe it, and  
frame your lives according to it. Do not you by

Sermon an ungodly life betray that gospel, which this  
XIV. apostle was set to defend, to the contempt and  
 reproach of its enemies. And while others  
please themselves with a notional religion, let  
this be your chief care, that *your conversation be  
as becomes the gospel of Christ.*

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The



*The distinguish'd Honour of aged Piety.*

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd

APRIL 18, 1722.

A T T H E

F U N E R A L

O F

Mrs. H-----.

PROV. XVI. 31.

*The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory,  
if it be found in the Way of Righte-  
ousness.*

**T**HERE is no beauty or comeliness Sermon  
like that of holiness. Nothing tends XV.  
more to adorn or recommend a person  
than this. And as 'tis natural to men  
to be concern'd that they may make a seemly  
appear-

# 388 *The distinguish'd Honour of aged Piety.*

Sermon appearance, and they are commonly studious to  
 XV. adorn themselves as much, at least, as their circumstances will allow; so the Holy Ghost has recommended this to us, under the notion of a most excellent and comely ornament, which suits persons of any age or condition.

Thus is it represented in those who are young, *Prov. i. 9.* Where the wise man speaking of instructions to fear and serve God, when they are observed and practis'd by such as are in that age, says, *They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck:* where he alludes to the ornaments of well set hair, and golden chains, and so declares the great seemliness of virtue for those who are young.

But the providence of God at present suggests to our consideration the suitableness of the same thing in those who are old; and the removal of an aged person from among us, calls upon such in a more especial manner to bethink themselves. And for this purpose I have chosen these words as the ground of my present discourse, *The hoary head is a crown of glory,* that is, 'tis a glorious crown, or like a noble and royal diadem, *if it be found in the way of righteousness.*

The words in the original being, as is usual in such proverbial speeches, somewhat abrupt and concise, there has been room left for a variety of sentiments, concerning the true rendering them.

Some think they are a proposal of the most likely course men can take to prolong their days; and therefore they thus render them: *The hoary head is a crown of glory, which is to be, or which shall be found or obtain'd in a way of righteousness.*

And this is agreeable to the fifth commandment, where a promise of long life is made to



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obedience; Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. To the like purpose the Psalmist commends virtue as the readiest way to prolong mens lives, *Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13, 14. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile: Depart from evil, and do good: Seek peace and pursue it.* We can have but little reason to expect any particular favour from God in lengthening out our lives, if we are not careful to obey and please him.

Some think that the duty of the aged is here prescribed; and so they render the text thus: *The hoary head is a crown of glory, it must be, or, it should be found in the way of righteousness;* as though he had said, “Age is honourable, and “gray hairs are an ornament: But then those “who are thus aged, ought to be careful of “their duty, and not fail to be found themselves “in the way of righteousness.

Our own translators have inserted the word *if* in their rendering, *if it be found in the way of righteousness:* And as there is nothing inconvenient in the sense they have expressed, or the manner of their rendering, I shall confine myself to it; and so the words declare to us, *That then is the hoary head more especially an ornament and glory, when 'tis found in the way of righteousness.*

There is somewhat venerable in old age; whence God joins the *ancient* and the *honourable* together, *Isa. ix. 15.* And he commanded in the old law that respect should be paid to such, *Lev. xix. 32. Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.* And Solomon tells us, *Prov. xx. 29. The glory of young*

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Sermon *men is their strength ; and the beauty of old men*  
 XV. *is their gray head.*

~~~~~ Young men who are in the prime of their strength, are lively and fit for action ; but the old, till their understanding becomes impair'd, are suppos'd most fit for counsel, and so for rule and authority. A respect therefore and deference has by the wisest nations been reckon'd due to their years. The *Roman Senate* was originally compos'd of old men, and took its name from thence : And the council, or *γερονσια* among the *Greeks*, was of the same nature : And among our selves one name of magistrates (*Aldermen*) is derived from their age : And so among the *Jews*, their great council consisted of the elders of the people ; and one proper name of the ministers of the gospel signifies an aged person.

But when men are old in righteousness as well as years, then is the hoary head indeed a crown of glory, a most excellent ornament that should command much respect and regard. And this I shall now endeavour to confirm by the following considerations.

I. Their knowledge may be suppos'd to be very considerable, by reason of the long time they have had for the acquiring it. Knowledge is not born with us, but is obtain'd by hearing, reading, and making observation. Herein men gradually improve : And therefore they may be suppos'd to have gain'd the most considerable stock of useful knowledge, who have had the longest time for it, provided they have made a good use of their time, as they must be suppos'd to have done, who have chosen the way of righteousness. Hence when the apostle commends the young men for their strength, he com-

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mends the fathers for their knowledge, 1 *John* ii. Sermon
14. 'Tis the duty of fathers to instruct and teach XV.
their children : And God has provided this
help for those who are young, and want under-
standing themselves ; that they are to be guided
by those who have had more time for the gain-
ing knowledge and experience, and who by their
natural affection, as well as his command, are
obliged to give them the best instruction. See
Deut. iv. 9, 10. It being so natural to suppose
that knowledge should advance with age, *Elibu*
very decently gave *Job's* friends the preference,
because they were elder than he, *Job* xxxii. 4. and
says he, ver. 6, 7. *I am young, and ye are very
old : Wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show
you mine opinion. I said, days should speak, and
multitude of years should teach wisdom.* It must be
a great reproach if such as are old are ignorant
in matters of religion ; if, *when for the time they
ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach
them again, which are the first principles of the ora-
cles of God*, *Heb.* v. 12. And though there may
be a great difference in persons, which may be
owing to their different natural abilities, im-
ployments and opportunities, &c. yet there is
no christian who has set out early in religion,
and has lived to a good old age, but he must
have gain'd a considerable stock of knowledge
by his own experience. Such a long life must
furnish him with a great variety of observations
concerning the methods of providence, the plea-
sure of religion, and the course a christian should
take. The name that was at first given to the
followers of the blessed *Jesus*, was that of *disci-
ples* : And as no school is more profitable than
Christ's, those who have been long in it, must
be suppos'd to have made some considerable

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Sermon proficiency in knowledge and experience. They

XV. must have observ'd much of the goodness of
 ~~~~~ God toward them, that has carried them thro'  
 their prolong'd lives; and the favourable turns  
 of his providence toward them must have often  
 sensibly affected them.

They have had a long time to be acquainted  
 with the changes of the world, and to convince  
 them of the uncertainty of all things here below,  
 and to take notice of God's wise and righteous  
 government over the world. They have had  
 a long time to experience the *ways of wisdom* to  
 be *pleasantness*, and *her paths peace*; to *taste and*  
*see that the Lord is gracious*, and that he is never  
 wanting in his returns to them that faithfully  
 serve him. Such a life as theirs must make them  
 know much of the evil of sin, as that which  
 offends God, causes him to hide his face, quenches  
 his spirit, and breaks the christian's peace.

'Tis common for young persons to think they  
 know much; but length of time makes them  
 ashamed of their former conceit; and then  
 while they really improve in their knowledge,  
 they are less puffed up with an opinion of it.

2. The virtue and sincerity of the aged is  
 more tried and approved than of those who  
 have but lately set out and engaged in religion.  
 Length of time tries all things: And we can  
 speak with more assurance and confidence of the  
 goodness of any thing, when we have been con-  
 vinc'd of it by a long experience. Such a thing,  
 is a man ready to say, I have used for so many  
 years; and it has proved well all the while,  
 and therefore I dare warrant it to be good.  
 And so 'tis in the case before us. 'Tis indeed a  
 most excellent and pleasing thing to see persons  
 set out well in religion, and particularly to  
 behold



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behold those who are young applying themselves to mind spiritual and heavenly concerns : And every one who has the least degree of piety does, and cannot but rejoyce at such a sight : But yet give me leave to tell such, that when we rejoyce upon this account, we rejoyce with trembling : We rejoyce that such set themselves to this work ; but we tremble, being afraid lest they should lay it aside again ; and lest their goodness, like *Ephraim's*, *Hos. vi. 4.* should be *as the morning cloud, and as the early dew should go away.* We are not able to see into the secrets of persons hearts, and therefore can only judge by appearance : And though when we have a hopeful prospect, we rejoyce ; yet when we consider the many instances there have been of those who have made a flourishing show in religion for a while, and have afterwards utterly abandon'd it ; when we consider the many and powerful temptations such are like to meet with, how can we be otherwise than greatly concern'd, and jealous for them ? I would not that any should misunderstand me, as though I design'd to discourage the indeavours of young persons. Far be it from me. May such go on and prosper ! Would to God we could see their numbers increase ! The proper use they are to make of this is, to be the more watchful and serious in the work ; and therefore let them think that my aim is only the same with the apostles, who says to the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. iv. 14.* *As my beloved sons I warn you.*

But now where persons have long chosen and walked in the paths of righteousness, and have express'd a constant regard to the christian rule, and made it, as far as we can judge, the business of a long life to please and obey God ; there we  
readily.

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Sermon readily look upon the matter as past doubt or  
 XV. suspicion. Such a long course of piety and god-  
 ~~~~~ linefs that has weather'd storms and difficulties,  
 and has held out against all opposition from the
 devil, the world, and the flesh, is not so liable
 to be called in question, as that which is yet to
 incounter all these.

It was a prudent caution which the king of
Israel suggested, *1 Kings xx. 11. Let not him that*
girdeth on his harness boast himself, as he that put-
eth it off; and very applicable 'tis in the pre-
 sent case. Those who are setting out in religion,
 are like persons buckling on their harness to
 the combat; and when they do it resolutely and
 manfully, 'tis well; and they deserve much
 commendation and encouragement: But yet
 they are to acknowledge a great difference be-
 tween themselves and such as are of a long stand-
 ing, who have ingaged the enemy, and stood
 their ground a great while, and are ready as
 it were to put off the harness, having gained the
 victory. When you set out you are following
 them; but it must be acknowledg'd at a con-
 siderable distance: And though you may here-
 after, when you come to be of their standing,
 yet at present 'tis plain you have not reach'd to
 them. You have imitated them in their setting
 out; but you have their example to follow in
 holding on to a good old age, and spending your
 whole life in the service of God.

3. As the virtue and holiness of the aged is
 more tried and approved through their long
 standing, so 'tis to be supposed upon the same
 account to be more considerable in the mea-
 sure and degree of it. Their perseverance does
 not only bespeak the sincerity of their faith,
 hope and love, but likewise a good improvement
 therein.

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therein. These virtues are in their nature progressive: And the promise of God secures to such as keep his way a continual increase. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,* Isa. xl. 31. God exercises a constant care over all sincere christians to render them more and more fruitful, *John xv. 2.* And therefore the longer they have been under his care, the more considerable must their improvement be suppos'd to be.

There is a double improvement which we may suppose christians to make; the one by becoming more confirm'd and establish'd in their holy religion; and the other by their abounding more in the fruits of righteousness. And this is agreeable to the representation which is sometimes made of good men in scripture, as *trees of the Lord's planting*, which you know grow at the root as well as in the branches, according to that allusion of the prophet, *Isa. xxxvii. 31. The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.* Now both these advantages are secured to sincere christians in the use of their endeavours. The apostle supposes the faithfulness of God engages him to confirm and establish those who are called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ, *1 Cor. i. 8, 9.* And their union with Christ their head, secures the other also: For from the head, that is Christ, *all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministred, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God,* Col. ii. 19. Whence the righteous are supposed continually to improve, and the *path of the just* is represented by the *shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,* Prov. iv. 18.

Now

Sermon

XV.

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Sermon Now if virtue and holiness are ornaments, as

XV. most certainly they are, when they are thus confirm'd and increased by a long continuance under divine aids, they must be as a *crown of glory*, as a bright and noble diadem to adorn any person.

4. Such persons are eminent instruments of bringing glory to God, and of usefulness in his church. The more conspicuous the power of religion is in persons, the more is God glorified by them. *Herein*, says our Lord, *John xv. 8. is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* And St. Paul assures us, *Philip. i. 11.* That the *fruits of righteousness*, wherewith christians are filled, are by *Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.* Now when is it that the power of religion does most appear, but when it shines thro' a long and well order'd life and conversation, when it has been the governing principle of a man's actions from his youth unto old age, and has brought forth the fruits of righteousness all along therein? The excellency of a religious principle, together with the noble design of the christian institution, does then very signally appear, when it regulates the whole course of a long life; curbing the disorderly affections of human nature, and overcoming the many and strong temptations of our spiritual adversaries, and manifestly subjecting the whole man to the guidance and government of the divine law.

The power of God's grace is by this means display'd, and a noble encouragement is given to others to mind religion, and to devote their lives to the service of God. Who can have the face to pretend that 'tis a vain thing to set about religion, and that the holiness requir'd

by

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by the gospel is not to be attain'd by men, Sermon
when he sees with his own eyes those who by XV.
the grace of God have attain'd it?

And as the efficacy of God's grace, so the goodness of his law, is nobly discover'd by this means. There is a singular excellency in the law of God, which easily recommends it self to a well disposed mind that attentively considers it: But the generality of men are little inclin'd to such inquiries, and so easily overlook the goodness of the rule; but when 'tis copied out fairly, and drawn to the life in mens conversation, 'tis not easy to avoid observing how amiable and lovely it appears. And therefore such persons as have led long and exemplary lives, or *hoary heads found in the way of righteousness*, are ornaments to their holy profession, and a credit to the religion of the blessed Jesus: They take the course to shame those that would reproach it, and to *put to silence the ignorance of such foolish and unreasonable men*. Such persons shine as *bright lights in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation*; and while others behold *their good works*, they glorify their heavenly Father. By their conversation they testify the necessity of true piety, and that the favour of God is not to be expected in a dissolute and ungodly course of life.

Farther, by their watchfulness and diligence in religion, they are of eminent service in the places where they live; in as much as God has a particular regard to those who are thus devoted to his fear; and by their earnest seeking to him, and standing in the gap, they avert the judgments which the looseness and profaneness of others are pulling down.

In

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Sermon In them is manifested the truth and faithfulness of God, as he appears to have made good to them those promises upon which they have depended. They are apt to speak of that loving kindness and truth which has so often affected them; and to own God's bounty and care in providing for them, and his faithfulness in afflicting them, and in giving them necessary aids and supports to carry them through the world. And were they to be silent, yet would the faithfulness of God appear in their perseverance, and the fruitfulness of their old age; while they continue to serve and honour him in an age that is most unfit for service, and are made to abound in the fruits of righteousness, and flourish in their souls under the decays of nature and bodily strength. The *Psalmist* has taught us thus to make our observation of God's dispensations toward his people, *Psal. xcii. 13, 14, 15. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: They shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright.*

And thus do they become a means of encouraging the fearful, and of strengthening the hands of the weak and feeble. It should be an encouragement to those who are setting out in religion when they behold those who have so long held on in it. Upon the same God who has upheld them may you depend, that he will likewise uphold and strengthen you. If you are sincere, the same promises that were made to them, are made to you; the same covenant that was their security shall be yours; and the same grace that was sufficient for them shall be for you also. And is it not the greatest glory to a person thus to bring honour to his maker, and to be

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be serviceable in his church? Then 'tis that a **Sermon** man does truly answer the end of his being, and **XV.** lives to a good purpose; but without this, what good account can be given of him? And how useless and insignificant a creature is he in the world!

5. The hoary head that is found in the way of righteousness is ripe for glory, and just ready to enter into it. To this purpose are the words of *Eliphaz*, Job v. 26. *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.* Aged christians are come very near to the conclusion of their days, and their work of preparing for the other world is almost happily over: And they can have but a little while to continue out of that blessed place which they have set their hearts upon, and which they have been growing up unto.

And certainly the hoary head may be well consider'd in this respect as a crown of glory. If we have any value for the blessed inhabitants of the other world, the more persons resemble them, and the nearer they are to their being removed to their society, the more we ought to esteem them. To them then is the hoary head a crown of glory, whom God has brought to it through a course of righteousness; for 'tis a sign and indication that God is about to receive them to glory. The hoary head is a sign of their approaching dissolution; and because of its being found in the way of righteousness, 'tis a sign of the happiness of that change which they shall then make.

To these considerations I might add, for a farther illustration of the matter, that when God was pleased to afford his servant in a vision some sensible and glorious representation of himself,
he

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Sermon he chose to do it in this manner, *Dan. vii. 9. I*

XV. beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wooll.

In like manner, when our blessed Saviour was beheld by St. *John* in a vision, *Rev. i. 14.* it was in this form: *His head and his hairs were white like wooll, as white as snow.* So that the hoary head that is found in the way of righteousness, does resemble the ever blessed God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, by bearing what is their truest image, *righteousness*; and is moreover such, as if they were to make a sensible representation of themselves to us in our present state; they would choose; and therefore well may it be stiled a crown of glory.

Having thus clear'd the assertion of the wise man in the text, I might draw various inferences from it. As,

1. I might hence infer the unreasonableness of that contempt that young persons sometimes shew to those who are old, mocking at their infirmities, and especially when they are good men. An instance we have of this, and the severe punishment of it, *2 Kings ii. 23, 24.* where we read of forty two children that were kill'd by two bears for mocking at *Elisba*, saying, *Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.* And 'tis the more unreasonable and heinous crime, when persons are guilty of this toward those to whom they are under special obligations; I mean toward their parents. God took care to secure the honour to be paid to them among the *Jews*, by a special commandment; and he that despises them not only sins against God; but really disgraces himself. 'Tis therefore good advice which *Solomon* gives, *Prov. xxiii. 22. Hearken*

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unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Sermon XV.

2. I might hence infer the reasonableness of that rule of the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 5. *Ye younger, submit your selves unto the elder.* They are your superiors, and a deference and regard is due to them as such. You are to give way to them, and let *days speak, and a multitude of years teach wisdom.* You are to hearken to their advice; and follow their example in what is good. God's providence has set a crown (and a crown of glory 'tis) upon their heads, and that should command your regard.

3. I might hence infer, how 'tis that persons should make preparation for the honour and comfort of old age, even by choosing the ways of righteousness while they are young.

But agreeably to the present occasion I shall rather choose to address my self to the aged; both to those who are, and those who are not found in the way of righteousness.

1. As to those upon whom God has set such a crown of glory, and who are found in the way of righteousness, I would suggest the following particulars by way of advice.

1. I think nothing can be more proper for you, whose case this is, than to live much in the expectation of death. The hoary head is a plain indication and sign that death cannot be far off. The wise man in his elegant description of old age, calls the gray head the *almond tree*; and when that *flourishes*, and the *grasshopper* becomes a *burden*, a man cannot be far from his *long home*, Eccl. xii. 5. You, one would think, can have no room to flatter your selves, as the young are very apt to do. You know that your time can't be long: You feel continual warnings

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by

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Sermon by the manifold weaknesses and infirmities which

XV. old age brings along with it, that death, of which these are harbingers and forerunners, can't be far behind. Nay, death is as it were actually attacking you, while it impairs your faculties, and wastes your strength. And does not this call upon you to think of it before-hand? Will you forget the grave, when you are just ready to fall into it, and find your selves too weak to avoid stooping towards it? You see what holy *Job's* resolution was, *chap. xiv. 14.* *All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change shall come*; and much more when that change is near, and ready as it were to enter at the door, does it become you to live in the expectation of it.

2. Let it be now your care, in an especial manner, to have the evidences of your title to future happiness and glory as clear as possible. Certainly I need not urge this upon you with reasons and arguments; your selves feel those which one would imagine should be more cogent than any I can use. Your manifold weaknesses and infirmities must convince you how much your circumstances need comfort; and so they may naturally quicken you to look after this, which you can't but know to be, the best comfort of all.

Besides, is not this very requisite in order to your being able to meet death chearfully, and without amazement? Use then the time that God gives you, to clear up to your selves the state and condition of your souls, your interest in the promise of a blessed reward, and your right to the glorious and eternal inheritance.

3. In order to this, labour now to be most abounding in all the fruits of righteousness, and

to

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to be doing all the good you can by the holiness and exemplariness of your lives and conversations, in that little time you have yet remaining. Your concern should be, that your last works may be your best. Glorify God then by all your words and actions; shew a resign'd frame of spirit to the will of God, and patiently bear the infirmities you feel, and may farther expect; and hold on in the course which you have been hitherto following. Sermon XV.

Take encouragement, your work is near done, and your warfare almost accomplished. And you have need now of only a little patience more; for yet a little while, and you shall be freed from all your infirmities and troubles, and be at rest. The dusk of that night that will put an end to your work, should quicken you to this. You have now but a little time left, wherein you can act for God and his glory here in the world, and therefore lose as little of it as possible. The review and remembrance of your past failings and neglects, which is very proper in your condition, should likewise prompt you to this: And the more sensible you are that you have in time past come short of your duty, the more zealous should you now be in the performance of it.

4. Set loose to this world, and labour to exercise and strengthen your faith in realizing views and expectations of a better world. Are you heirs of glory, and just ready to enter upon the possession of it, and can it become you to be unmindful of it? How should your thoughts be taken up with it, and your souls long after it! Glorious things are spoken of the place you are hastening unto, and where you are shortly to be fix'd for ever. God will speedily *show* you

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Sermon *the path of life, and bring you to his presence,*

XV. *where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore*; where the vail shall be done away, and you shall not see as in a glass darkly, but face to face, and know as you are also known; where you shall be with the blessed Redeemer to behold his glory, and to be made like to him; where you shall be freed from all sins, all temptations, and all sorrow, and become compleatly glorious, and endlessly blessed.

Lift up then the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees; raise now your thoughts to the heavenly mansions that are in your Father's house, and delight your souls with the contemplation of that bliss to which you shall be suddenly advanc'd. Consider the promises of God, which both describe and secure that blessedness to you: And let your faith be exercis'd to greaten it to you. This will be a mighty ease and a wonderful encouragement to you; and the more you cherish these thoughts, the more will your minds be reconciled to the expectations of death, and the less frightful will it appear to you.

And while you are persuaded of these things, and imbrace the divine promises, let it appear that you look upon your selves only as strangers and pilgrims in this world; that as you do not place your happiness in it, so you are not much concern'd about it.

'Tis a shame to a christian to have his heart at any time glewed to this world; but more especially when he is just about leaving it. However frequent this is with christians, 'tis very disagreeable: It looks as though they and the world had been too good friends, that they are so unwilling to part with it. But if thou art a
christian

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christian indeed, thou must look upon the world as thine enemy : And if thou dost so account it, let it be thy endeavour to slight it, and live above it. I am sure the more lively thy apprehensions are of the other world, the less affected wilt thou be with all the occurrences of the present state.

5. Plead with God his own promises. I mean those promises which are particularly suited to your case, such as, those which engage him never to leave or forsake his people. These you may enforce by the circumstances you are in, which do more especially call for his aid, as the *Psalmist* thus urges his plea grounded in general upon God's promises, and the usual dispensations of his grace toward his people, *Psal. lxxi. 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* And again, *ver. 17, 18. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth : and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not.* But more especially should you plead the promise that is made of the fruitfulness of those of your years, *Psal. xcii. 13, 14. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing.*

6. Look back upon the mercies of God to you, and be much in blessing God for them. Such a life as yours must have been attended with a great variety of mercies, for which a large tribute of praise is due to him. In how grateful and decent a manner did *Jacob*, toward the end of his life, think and speak of what he had enjoy'd ! *Gen. xlviii. 15. The God, says he, which fed me all my life long unto this day : And herein he is worthy of your imitation. You have received*

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Sermon much at his hands: 'Tis he who has furnish'd

XV. you with the comforts or necessities of life
 you have enjoy'd, who has preserv'd you from
 dangers, deliver'd you from troubles, healed
 your diseases, given you health and strength,
 and brought you thus far, and has now set that
 crown of glory the text speaks of upon you:
 To him you are indebted that you are found in
 the way of righteousness, which makes your
 hoary heads to be indeed crowns of glory; as
 'tis he who gave you that counsel, and inclined
 your hearts to follow it, and who has *led you in*
the paths of righteousness, not for your desert, but
for his own name sake: 'Tis he who in conse-
 quence hereof has pardon'd your sins, accepted
 your persons and services, bound up your broken
 hearts, rais'd you up when you were cast down;
 and, in a word, made all things to work together
 for your good here, and has given you a title
 to eternal life and joy hereafter. And is it not
 most reasonable, when you are thus indebted to
 him, that your souls, and all that is within
 you, should be stirred up to bless his holy
 name?

7. Repine not at your present circumstances,
 nor be fretful in your condition, though attended
 with various infirmities, and much weariness and
 pain. Your hoary heads being found in the way
 of righteousness are crowns of glory: What
 cause can you then have to repine? Bless God
 who has made you thus truly honourable, and
 wonder not that the wearing a crown should be
 accompanied with some troubles. The same is
 the case of all earthly crowns; but the troubles
 of yours will last but a little while.

8. Be much in the exercise of trust in Christ,
 and frequent in commending your souls to his care.

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Upon his mediation you must depend, because Sermon XV.
nothing will stand you in stead without it. He is able and ready to procure you a compleat pardon of all your sins, to give you comfort in passing through death, and minister to you abundantly an entrance into his everlasting kingdom. He has *the keys of hell and death*, Rev. i. 18. is Lord of the invisible world, and of death the passage into it; he opens, and none can shut; and shuts, and none can open; nor can any *pluck out of his hand* those who are under his care. In him therefore are you to trust, and to him you are to commend your spirits. And since the infirmities of your age daily admonish you, that death can't be far off from you; and since the thread of life is spun out so fine with you, that the smallest matter is sufficient of a sudden to snap it; should not this be your daily employment, to be commending your souls to his special care, intreating him to be your conductor to death, and at death to receive you to glory? Is it not a satisfaction to you, when you think of leaving your selves upon him and his care? and when you know in whom you believe, and that he is able to keep that which you commit to his care? And have you not need therefore frequently to be renewing this your trust in him?

2. On the other hand, let me now apply myself to those who are old, or well towards it, and yet are not found in the way of righteousness. And surely 'tis high time for you now to bethink your selves, and change your course. Have you all your days walk'd in an opposite and contrary path, neglecting to follow after holiness, and can you question whether you ought immediately to set about it? Give me leave to expostulate the matter with you. And,

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Sermon I. Is it not plain that you turn your glory in-
 XV. to a reproach? Your hoary heads, that should
 be to you as crowns of glory, and would be so if
 you were found in the way of righteousness, are
 now your shame; as they are an aggravation of
 all your neglect and carelessness. You who ought
 to have *remember'd your creator* from the *days of*
your youth, and to have spent your whole lives
 in his service, are now become old in your for-
 getfulness of him, and neglect of his service.
 What a reproach is it to you to have spent so
 many years in the world, and yet to remain un-
 acquainted with the very end and business which
 you came into the world for? You have lived so
 long, but have been dead to God and his service
 while you lived. One would think that the
 world should long ago have convinced you of its
 vanity; and that your own experience should
 have taught you, that nothing here was fit to
 be the rest and portion of your souls, and should
 therefore have put you upon seeking after God;
 and yet, though you have had so much time,
 and so many opportunities, this is hitherto ne-
 glected; and neither the indulgence of God in
 sparing you, nor perhaps his severity in afflict-
 ing you, have reclaim'd you to the path of
 righteousness: But now your life is almost done,
 you are to begin to live. Is not your ignorance,
 or neglect of God and your duty to him, of your
 selves and your own hearts, and of the way of
 life and salvation by Christ, (is not this, I say)
 a shame to you at these years? *For the time*
that you have lived, and that in the church of
God, ye ought to be teachers: And yet *there is*
need that one teach you which are the first princi-
ples of the oracles of God; and now when your work
 should be just finish'd, the very foundation is not
 so much as laid.

2, Is

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2. Is it a fitting thing that you should follow the path you are in to the end of your lives? *Sermon XV.*
Is it a fitting thing that death should find you going astray from the way of righteousness? and that you should come into the world, and go out of it, without ever entertaining any serious thoughts of the main business of life?

Is this agreeable, do you think, to the end for which God made you, and sent you into the world, that you should live here so many years, and all the while do him no manner of service? 'Tis your reproach that you have squander'd away the best of your time, and have nothing now but the dregs to offer to your maker; and are they too good for his service also? Can't you now at length find in your hearts to seek him in the way of righteousness? or are you resolved that your Creator and Lord shall have no service at all from you? Methinks the time you have lost should quicken you now to use double diligence in your work; since the work it self is great, and of everlasting consequence, and you have increas'd the difficulty of it; while you have been hardening your hearts through a long course of sin; and you have left your selves but very little time for the doing it.

3. If you can't think of minding this affair now, when will you? You have no room to reckon upon a long stay here; and therefore unless you set about it now, it must remain for ever undone. Is it not then yet time for you to seek the Lord? Or must he be still put off farther by you?

4. Should not the mercy of God stir you up to seek him? 'Tis marvellous mercy there should be still any hope left in your case. The work
is

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Sermon is not utterly impossible, though it must be
 XV. own'd your course has render'd it very hard and
 difficult. Divine patience is still prolong'd, and
 the offer of the gospel is renew'd ; you have
 yet time to seek God in and through his Christ,
 and to pray for his spirit to enlighten your minds,
 soften your hearts, and renew your souls ; *With*
God all things are possible. Awake then out of
 your security, and shake off your sloth, and call
 upon God as for your lives ; *break off your sins by*
repentance, and from a conviction of your guilt,
 and a sense of your danger, *flee for refuge to lay*
hold of the hope set before you ; and while you
 have yet time, and a merciful redeemer is intreat-
 ing you, hearken to his call, and give up your
 selves to his conduct.

5. Should you not be moved by what is like
 to be the terrible issue and consequence of your
 neglect and carelessness ? If you will not be found
 now in the way of righteousness, you must not
 expect to be settled in the mansions of the righte-
 ous ; you can't then reasonably expect that you
 should *die the death of the righteous*, or that your
latter end should be like his : You must then assu-
 redly perish in your iniquity, and your blood
 will be upon your own heads. God has prepa-
 red vengeance for such, and he will render
 to them a due recompence in the other world.
 And though your lives should be ever so far pro-
 long'd, yet are you accursed ; for *the sinner being*
an hundred years old, shall be accursed, Isa. lxxv. 20.
 God is *angry with you every day* ; and though you
 may slight that now, yet hereafter he will make
 you feel the terribleness of his wrath.

Be not then strangers to your own advantage ;
 but as you have such plain signs of your ap-
 proaching change, lay them to heart. God
 speaks

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speaks of *Ephraim* as grossly stupid, because he was so little apprehensive of the signs of his own case, *Hos. vii. 9. Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not.* Do these in a literal sense appear upon you, and should you not consider what they are the fore-runners of? Or can you consider this, and not be concern'd to prepare for it? Keep it fix'd upon thy mind, that death will soon overtake thee; whether thou wilt mind this work or no, in a little time, as thou now followest others, thou thy self shalt be followed by others to thy grave; for *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* And if that were all, it were indeed a light matter, in comparison of what is certainly join'd with it; for when the *dust returns to the earth as it was*, then (O think of it, and prepare for it; then I say) *the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Sermon XV.

F I N I S.

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 speaks of Ephebus as a very stupid, because he seldom
 was so little apprehensive of the signs of his own
 case, that will go. Give him a box and there
 was him, and he knewed it not. Do this in a
 literal sense appear upon you, and should you
 not consider what they are the fore-runners of?
 Or can you consider this, and not be contented
 to prepare for it? Keep it fix'd upon thy mind,
 that death will soon overtake thee; whether thou
 wilt mind this work or no, in a little time, as
 thou now followest others, then thyself shall be
 followed by others to thy grave; for what thou
 art, and what thou shalt be, And if that
 were all, it were indeed a light matter, in con-
 sideration of what is certainly join'd with it; for
 when this is return'd to the earth as it was, then
 (O think of it, and prepare for it; then I say)
 what shall we become? And who shall give it?

Bible - Selections [English]

A
SCRIPTURE-CATECHISM;
OR, THE
PRINCIPLES
OF THE
Christian Religion,
Laid down in the
WORDS of the BIBLE.

A
SCRIPTURE-CATECHISM;

OR THE

PRINCIPLES

OF THE

Christian Religion

As contained in the Bible.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

TH E design of a catechism, is to teach the principles of revealed religion. Whence many have thought that the best way of composing one, is to set down those principles in the very words of revelation. Could my importunity have prevailed with any of those able persons whom I solicited to undertake it, the world would long since have been favour'd with such an one, without needing to be troubled with this. But when they who declined the work, yet thought it highly necessary; I chose rather to undertake it my self, than let it remain undone.

I have used my best judgment in collecting suitable texts of scripture, and in framing questions to introduce them, and help the memories of such as are to learn them. I hope I have not omitted any first or necessary principles of religion, nor by the questions given a wrong turn to any of the texts. I wish I could have brought it into a narrower compass, that young memories might be the more eased: But if there be prudent management used by teachers, the task will not be hard to be learnt by those who have a tolerable capacity. And here they learn nothing but the scriptures; and so need not be burden'd with an addition of proofs, as they are sometimes when they have learnt other catechisms.

I have

I have put the chapter and verse into the margin; that they who would, by comparing the contexts, satisfy themselves whether they are applied in their true sense, may be able readily to turn to them in their bibles; and that children may not be burden'd to little purpose in getting so many numbers by heart.

As 'twill be an advantage to the catechumens, that they are here to learn, not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; so it may be a satisfaction to any catechist who shall think fit to use it, that he will not have the words of fallible men, but only the holy scriptures to explain.

I shall be very glad if the defects of my performance shall convince my friends, that they ought now, tho' they would not before, hearken to my request, and set forth a catechism in some such form. But if they will choose to bear with this, rather than put themselves to that trouble; I desire they will look upon this only as an essay, and that they will favour me with their thoughts, that if ever it should come to another impression, I may be assisted by their advice in mending it. I promise to make the best use I can of whatever shall be offer'd by strangers as well as acquaintance, by church-men or dissenters, who, in this, may, I hope, perfectly agree. And my bookseller will take care to convey to me whatever shall be left with him for me.

May the God of all grace, and the Father of lights, vouchsafe to bless this, or some such attempt, to the spreading of the knowledge of the scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

A

Scripture Catechism, &c.

Quest. **W**HAT are the first principles of religion, both natural and revealed?

A. He that cometh to God, must believe Heb. xi. 6. that *he is*, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him.

Q. How may it be certainly known by all men, that there is a God?

A. The invisible things of him from the crea-Rom. i. 20. tion of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

Q. Is the light of nature a manifestation from God, which we may depend upon?

A. That which may be known of God, is Rom. i. 19. manifest in them [*that is*, in the Gentiles,] for God hath shewed it unto them.

Q. Have not christians another rule, besides the light of nature?

A. From a child thou hast known the holy 2 Tim. iii. 15, scriptures, which are able to make thee wise 16, 17. unto salvation, thro' faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Q. Does the word scripture signify the writings of the apostles themselves, as well as the old testament?

E e

A.

² Pet. iii. 16. *A.* In which [that is, St. Paul's epistles] are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the *other scriptures*, unto their own destruction.

Q. All scripture then must be by inspiration, provided it appears that the apostle who testifies this, was himself inspired; now what does he say of himself in this respect?

¹ Cor. ii. 12, 13. *A.* We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the *spirit which is of God*, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the *Holy Ghost teacheth*.

Q. How does it appear that this testimony he gives of himself, is true?

² Cor. xii. 12. *A.* Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs*, and *wonders*, and *mighty deeds*.

Q. What then is our duty?

John v. 39. *A.* Search the scriptures.

Q. How many Gods are there?

¹ Tim. ii. 5. *A.* There is *one God*.

Q. Who is this one God?

¹ Cor. viii. 5, 6. *A.* Tho' there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many) yet to us there is but *one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we for him.

Eph. iv. 6. *One God and Father* of all, who is above all, and thro' all, and in you all.

Q. What is God?

John iv. 24. *A.* God is a *spirit*.

Q. What does his being a spirit teach you?

John iv. 24. *A.* They that worship him, must *worship him in spirit and in truth*.

Q. What

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Q. What kind of spirit is he? Can you tell me any of his attributes?

A. The blessed and only potentate, the King 1 Tim. vi. 15;
of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath 16.
immortality, dwelling in the light which no man
can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or
can see.

The King eternal, immortal, invisible. 1 Tim. i. 17.

The Father of lights, with whom is no vari- James i. 17.
ableness, neither shadow of turning.

Great is our Lord, and of great power; his Psal. cxlviii. 5.
understanding is infinite.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which Rev. iv. 8.
was, and is, and is to come.

The Lord is righteous. Psal. cxxix. 4.

There is none good but one, that is God. Matt. xix. 17.

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gra- Exod. xxxiv.
cious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and 6, 7.
truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving
iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will
by no means clear the guilty.

Q. What learn you from these attributes?

A. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be Psal. xlviii. 1.
praised.

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glo- Rev. xv. 4.
rify thy name?

Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Isa. xxvi. 4.
Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

As he which hath called you is holy, so be 1 Pet. i. 15;
ye holy in all manner of conversation; because 16.
'tis written, be ye holy, for I am holy.

I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Psal. xviii. 1,
Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my 2, 3.
deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I
will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my
salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon
the Lord who is worthy to be praised.

Luke vi. 36. Be ye therefore *merciful*, as your Father also is *merciful*.

Q. *Is creation the work of God?*

Gen. i. 1. A. In the beginning *God created* the heaven and the earth.

Q. *How did God make man?*

Gen. ii. 7. A. The Lord God formed man of the *dust* of the ground, and *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath of life*; and man became a living soul.

Gen. i. 27. So God created man in his *own image*, in the *image of God* created he him.

Q. *What learn you from this?*

Neh. ix. 6. A. Thou, even thou art *Lord alone*, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the Seas, and all that is therein.

Rev. iv. 11. Thou art *worthy*, O Lord, to *receive glory, and honour, and power*; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

Ecc. xii. 1. Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.

Q. *Does God take care of the creatures he made?*

Neh. ix. 6. A. Thou *preservest* them all.

Matt. x. 29, 30. One sparrow shall not fall on the ground *without your Father*. But the very *hairs* of your head are all *number'd*.

Acts xvii. 28. In him we *live, and move, and have our being*.

Q. *What duty then learn you hence?*

Matt. x. 31. A. *Fear ye not* therefore.

Matt. vi. 31. Therefore *take no thought*, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be cloathed?

Casting

*Casting all your care upon him, for he careth 1 Pet. v. 7.
 for you.*

*Q. Need we no other knowledge, but this
 of the only true God, in order to our salvation ?*

*A. This is life eternal, that they might John xvii. 3.
 know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ
 whom thou hast sent.*

Q. Who is Jesus Christ ?

A. The Son of the living God. Matt. xvi. 16.

*Q. Why was he called Jesus, that is, a Sa-
 viour ?*

*A. Thou shalt call his name Jesus ; for he Matt. i. 21.
 shall save his people from their sins.*

*Q. Why was he called Christ, or Messias,
 that is, in English, the anointed ?*

*A. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Acts x. 38.
 Holy Ghost, and with power.*

*Q. Do you read any thing of him, or any state
 he was in, before he came into the world ?*

*A. In the beginning was the word, and the John i. 1, 2, 3.
 word was with God, and the word was God.
 The same was in the beginning with God. All
 things were made by him, and without him was
 not any thing made that was made.*

*Q. You said before, that God made all things ;
 how then do you now say that Christ made
 them ?*

A. By Christ God made the worlds. Heb. i. 2.

Q. What character does Christ bear ?

*A. There is one mediator between God and 1 Tim. ii. 5.
 men, the man Christ Jesus.*

*Q. What was the condition of men that need-
 ed the help of a mediator ?*

*A. All have sinned and come short of the glory Rom. iii. 24
 of God.*

*Q. How came men at first into this condi-
 tion ?*

Rom. v. 12. *A. By one man sin entred into the world, and death by sin.*

Q. How did Christ come into the world?

John i. 14. *A. The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*

Q. At whose will and pleasure was this?

Gal. iv. 4. *A. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman.*

Q. What does Christ himself say of it?

John viii. 42. *A. I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of my self, but he sent me.*

John vi. 38. *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

Q. What do you read concerning his birth?

Matt. i. 18, 23. *A. The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph (before they came together) she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. — Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us.*

Luke ii. 7. *She brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped him in swadling-clothes, and laid him in a manger.*

Q. Was not his life attempted to be taken away soon after he was born?

Matt. ii. 16. *A. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

Q. Do you read any thing of Christ in his childhood, wherein he should be imitated by children?

A. He

A. He went down with his parents, and Luke iii. 51, came to Nazareth, and was *subject* unto them. 52.

—And Jesus *increased* in wisdom and stature, and in *favour* with God and man.

Q. Who was the messenger sent before Christ?

A. There was a man sent from God, whose John i. 6, 7. name was *John*. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.

Q. What office did Christ execute?

A. *Moses* truly said unto the fathers, a *pro-* Acts iii. 22. *phet* shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me.

Q. What sort of prophet was he?

A. A prophet mighty in deed and word before Luke xxiv. 19. God and all the people.

Q. How can it be known that Christ was a prophet, or teacher come from God?

A. We know that thou art a teacher come John iii. 2. from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.

Q. What is your duty to him as he is a prophet?

A. Him shall ye hear in all things, what- Acts iii. 22. soever he shall say unto you.

Q. Does Christ execute any other office beside that of a prophet?

A. Jesus made an *high priest* for ever. Heb. vi. 20.

Q. After what order is Christ a priest?

A. Another priest should rise after the order Heb. vii. 11. of *Melchisedec*, and not be called after the order of *Aaron*.

Q. What was the business of the priests after the order of Aaron?

A. Daily to offer up sacrifice, first for his own Heb. vii. 27. sins, and then for the people's.

Q. Had Christ any need to do this?

- ibid. *A. He needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice.*
- Q. Did he ever do it?*
- ibid. *A. This he did once when he offer'd up himself.*
- Q. To whom did he offer up himself?*
- Eph. v. 2. *A. Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.*
- Q. For what end did Christ offer himself?*
- Matt. xx. 28. *A. The Son of man came—to give his life a ransom for many.*
- Q. What was the death Christ died?*
- Philip. ii. 8. *A. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*
- Q. What was the manner of this death of the cross?*
- Psal. xxii. 16. *A. They pierced my hands and my feet.*
- Acts. x. 39. *Whom they slew, and hanged on a tree.*
- Q. Was there any thing considerable in this death beside the pain?*
- Heb. xii. 2. *A. He indured the cross, despising the shame.*
- Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*
- Q. What was Christ's behaviour on the cross?*
- And first, how did he carry himself toward those who crucified him?*
- Luke xxii. 34. *A. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*
- Q. What said he to the penitent thief?*
- xxiii. 43. *A. Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*
- Q. What said he when dying?*
- A. He*

A. He said, 'Tis finished; and he bowed John xix. 30.
his head, and gave up the ghost.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud Luke xxiii. 46.
voice, he said, *Father, into thy hands I com-
mend my spirit*: and having said thus, he gave
up the ghost.

Q. What advantages have we by his death?

A. In him we have redemption through his Eph. i. 7.
blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Having boldness to enter into the holiest by Heb. x. 19.
the blood of Jesus.

He bore our sins in his own body on the 1 Pet. ii. 24.
tree, that we being dead to sin, should live
unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were
healed.

Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, 1 Pet. ii. 21,
that ye should follow his steps. — Who 23.
when he was reviled, reviled not again; when
he suffer'd, he threatned not: but committed
himself to him that judgeth righteously.

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, Eph. v. 2.
and hath given himself for us.

Q. What followed upon his death?

A. That he was buried; and that he rose 1 Cor. xv. 4.
again the third day, according to the scrip-
tures.

Q. Was there any reason for his rising again
so soon?

A. David seeing this before, spake of the Acts ii. 31.
resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not
left in hell, neither his flesh did see corrup-
tion.

Q. Who raised Christ from the dead?

A. God the Father raised him from the Gal. i. 1.
dead.

Q. But does not Christ say of the temple of
his body, Destroy this temple, and in three
days

days I will raise it up? *John ii. 19. How then could this be done by the Father?*

John x. 18. A. I have power to lay it [that is, my life] down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Q. What may we learn from Christ's resurrection?

Rom. i. 4. A. He was declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Acts xvii. 31. God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordain'd, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

1 Cor. xv. 20. Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Q. What follow'd upon his resurrection?

1 Cor. xv. 5, 6. A. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.

Acts i. 3. To his apostles he shew'd himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Q. What became of him at the end of the forty days?

Acts i. 9. A. While the apostles beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud receiv'd him out of their sight.

Q. Was not our Lord's priesthood at an end when he went into the heavens?

Heb. vii. 21. A. The Lord swears, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever.

Q. By whose appointment was this eternal priesthood committed to him?

A. Christ

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A. Christ glorified not himself to be made Heb. v. 5. an high priest; but *he that said unto him*, thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Q. Does then the begetting there spoken of, relate to God's raising him from the dead?

A. The promise which was made unto the Acts xiii. 31. fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us 33. their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again: As 'tis also written in the second psalm, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

Q. How is Christ represented now he is ascended?

A. We have such an high priest, who is Heb. viii. 1. set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.

Q. What advantage was this to the christian church?

A. Being by the right hand of God exalted, Acts ii. 33. and having received of the father the promise of the holy ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

Q. How did Christ obtain this gift?

A. I will pray the Father, and he shall give John xiv. 16. you another comforter.

Q. What is to be learn'd from this pouring out of the Spirit?

A. Therefore let all the house of Israel Acts ii. 36. know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Q. And is not this a confirmation of the christian religion in general?

A. The great salvation, which at the first Heb. ii. 3, 4. began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders,

wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the holy ghost, according to his own will.

Q. Since you have mention'd the holy ghost, give now a farther account of him : And first I ask whose spirit he is ?

Matt. iii. 16.

A. The spirit of God.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

The spirit that is of God.

Matt. x. 20.

The spirit of your Father.

Isa. lxi. 1.

The spirit of the Lord God.

Phil. i. 19.

The spirit of Christ.

Q. How do you prove he is not the Father himself ?

John i. 32.

A. John bare record, saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

Q. Could not the Father then possibly have been seen ?

John v. 37.

A. Ye have neither heard his [that is, the Father's] voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

Q. How do you prove the holy spirit is not Christ himself ?

John xvi. 7.

A. It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you : but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Q. Is he then really distinct both from the Father and Christ ?

John xiv. 16, 17.

A. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth.

Q. Did he inspire the old Prophets ?

2 Pet. i. 21.

A. Holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the holy ghost.

Q. Did he teach the apostles ?

John xiv. 26.

A. He shall teach you all things.

Q. Is

Q. Is not he the author of all extraordinary gifts, and miraculous operations?

A. All these worketh that one and the self 1 Cor. xii. 11. *same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Q. Was he the guide of our Lord while here on earth?

A. Jesus being full of the holy ghost, return'd Luke iv. 1. *from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness.*

Q. Did Christ by the spirit perform his miracles?

A. If I cast out devils by the spirit of God. Matt. xii. 28.

Q. Is our salvation owing to this spirit?

A. God our Saviour — saves us — by the Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6. *renewing of the holy ghost, which he shed on us abundantly thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

Q. What then is his great work on Christians?

A. Sanctification of the spirit. 2 Thef. ii. 13.

Q. What do Christians under his influences?

A. Through Christ we both [that is, Jews Eph. ii. 18. *and Gentiles] have an access by one spirit unto the Father.*

If ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds Rom. viii. 13. *of the body.*

Q. What then is their course of life?

A. They walk not after the flesh, but after Rom. viii. 4. *the spirit.*

Q. Does the spirit of God dwell in them?

A. Know ye not that ye are the temple of 1 Cor. iii. 16; *God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

Q. How does their being the temple of God agree with what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. vi. 19. *that the Christian's body is the temple of the holy ghost?*

A. In

Eph. ii. 22.

A. In whom [that is, in Christ] you also are builded together for an habitation of God thro' the spirit.

Q. What is the benefit Christians have by the spirit's dwelling in them?

Rom. viii. 11.

A. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he, that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you.

Rom. viii. 14, 17.

As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. — If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joynt heirs with Christ.

Q. What encouragement have we to pray for the spirit?

Luke xi. 13.

A. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?

Q. What is our duty with regard to the holy spirit?

Eph. iv. 30.

A. Grieve not the holy spirit of God.

1 Thes. v. 19.

Quench not the spirit.

Q. Beside this gift of the Holy Spirit; what other advantage have we by Christ's priestly office now in heaven?

Heb. vii. 25.

A. He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Q. What is our duty arising from this consideration?

Heb. iv. 14, 16.

A. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. --- Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

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By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of Heb. xiii. 15.
praise to God continually.

Q. What other office has Christ?

A. He is Lord of lords, and King of kings. Rev. xvii. 14.

Q. Whence has he his kingly power?

A. I have set [or, anointed] my King upon Psal. ii. 6.
my holy hill of Sion.

Thou hast given him power over all flesh, John xvii. 2:
that he should give eternal life to as many
as thou hast given him.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given John iii. 35.
all things into his hand.

Q. All what things?

A. All power is given unto me in heaven Mat. xxviii.
and in earth. 18.

Q. Are the angels then subject to him?

A. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eph. i. 17, 20,
Father of glory — raised him from the dead, 21, 22.
and set him at his own right hand in the
heavenly places, far above all principality, and
power, and might, and dominion, and every
name that is named, not only in this world,
but also in that which is to come; and hath
put all things under his feet, and gave him to
be the head over all things to the church.

Q. Is the church then peculiarly our Saviour's
kingdom upon earth?

A. Christ is the head of the church, and he Eph. v. 23,
is the Saviour of the body. — The church 24.
is subject unto Christ.

Q. Is Christ's a worldly kingdom?

A. My kingdom is not of this world. John xviii. 36.

Q. Has Christ as King left us any laws to
observe?

A. Teaching them to observe all things Matt. xxviii.
whatsoever I have commanded you. 20.

Q. Does Christ promise worldly rewards to our obedience?

Matt. xvi. 24. *A. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Q. What is the reward of our obedience?

Heb. v. 9. *A. He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*

Q. What then is the certain punishment of disobedience?

2. Thes. i. 7, 8, 9. *A. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*

Q. Is the authority over conscience peculiar to Christ?

Matt. xxiii. 8, 10. *A. One is your master, even Christ.*

Q. Are then the commandments of men no rule for our consciences in the worship of God?

Matt. xv. 9. *A. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Q. Are we not bound to obey the Jewish law, since that was the law of God?

Eph. ii. 15. *A. Christ has abolish'd in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contain'd in ordinances.*

Q. But has Christ abolish'd that morality which was required in the old testament?

Matt. v. 17. *A. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Q. What then is the sum of that righteousness, required by the law, which Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil?

A. Thou

A. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with Mat. xxii. 37. all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with 38, 39, 40. all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

If ye fulfil the *royal law*, according to the Jam. ii. 8. scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self, ye do well.

Q. What was the first of the ten commandments in the law?

A. I am the Lord thy God which have Exod. xx. 2, 3. brought thee out of the land of *Egypt*, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

Q. Have we any the like rule in the new testament?

A. We preach unto you, that ye should Acts xiv. 15. turn from these vanities unto the *living God*, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.

Worship God.

Q. What was the second commandment?

Rev. xix. 10.
Exod. xx. 9.

A. Thou shalt not make unto thee any Exod. xx. 4, 5, 6. graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

Q. Have you any the like commandment in the new testament?

1 Cor. x. 7. *A. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them.*

1 John v. 21. *Keep your selves from idols.*

Q. What was the third commandment?

Exod. xx. 7. *A. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

Q. Is perjury or false swearing more contrary to this law, than to the gospel?

1 Tim. i. 9, 10, 11. *A. The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient,—for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.*

Q. But if oaths are consider'd as taking God's name in vain, not only when they are false, but when they are useless, such as are mens profane oaths in conversation; are they then also forbidden by the gospel?

Matt. v. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. *A. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self; but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou can'st not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

Q. Can an oath be now of any use?

A. Men

A. Men verily swear by the greater ; and Heb. vi. 16. an oath for confirmation is to them an *end of all strife.*

Q. *Is there in the new testament any instance of good mens taking an oath ?*

A. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lye not.

Q. *What was the fourth commandment ?*

A. Remember the sabbath day to keep it Exod. xx. 8, 9, holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all 10, 11. thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is ; and rested the seventh day ; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Q. *Was there not somewhat merely ceremonial in this commandment, by which consequently christians are not bound ?*

A. Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the *sabbath days* ; which are a *shadow* of things to come, but the body is of Christ.

Q. *But is there no day christians are to observe, as having a relation to Christ ?*

A. I was in the Spirit on the *Lord's day.* Rev. i. 10.

Q. *Was it on that day Christ rose from the dead ?*

A. Now when Jesus was risen early the *first day* of the Week. the Mark xvi. 9.

Q. Did the primitive christians hold their assemblies, and perform their religious service on that day?

Acts xx. 7.

A. Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.

Q. And did he by any order he gave, approve or confirm this practice?

1 Cor. xvi. 1,
2.

A. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.

Q. Do you know of any particular summary given by our Saviour, of the six last commandments, which contain'd men's duty to one another?

Luke vi. 31.

A. As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Q. What was the fifth commandment?

Exod. xx. 12.

A. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Q. Have we the like in the new testament?

Eph. vi. 1, 2,
3.

A. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou may'st live long on the earth.

Q. What was the sixth commandment?

Exod. xx. 13.

A. Thou shalt not kill.

Q. What command does our Saviour give in this point?

Matt. v. 21, 22.

A. Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that who-

soever is angry with his brother *without a cause*, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the counsel: But whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

Q. What was the seventh commandment?

A. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Exod. xx. 14.

Q. What direction does our Saviour give in this point?

A. Ye have heard that it was said by them Matt. v. 27, of old time, *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* 28, &c. But I say unto you, that whosoever *looketh on a woman to lust after her*, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Q. What was the eighth commandment?

A. Thou shalt not steal. Exod. xx. 15.

Q. Is the same thing forbidden in the new testament?

A. Let him that stole, steal no more; but Eph. iv. 28, rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Neither thieves, — nor extortioners — 1 Cor. vi. 10. shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Q. What was the ninth commandment?

A. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Exod. xx. 16.

Q. Is the same thing condemn'd by our Saviour?

A. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, Matt. xv. 19, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, *false witness*, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.

Q. What rule does the apostle give concerning this matter?

A. Put-

Eph. iv. 25. *A.* Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.

Tit. iii. 2. *A.* Speak evil of no man.

Q. What was the tenth commandment?

Exod. xx. 17. *A.* Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Q. Does our Saviour forbid the same thing?

Luke xii. 15. *A.* He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness.

Q. And what rule does the apostle give in this point?

Heb. xiii. 5. *A.* Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.

Q. Can you rehearse to me any places of the new testament, which declare the judgments of God against several sorts of sinners together, which ought therefore to deter christians from those sins?

1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *A.* Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But

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But the *fearful*, and *unbelieving*, and the *Rev. xxi. 8.*
abominable, and *murderers*, and *whoremongers*,
and *sorcerers*, and *idolaters*, and all *liars*, shall
have their part in the lake which burneth
with fire and brimstone ; which is the second
death.

Q. Can you tell me any short summary of
our positive duty ?

A. Testifying both to the Jews and also *Acts xx. 21.*
to the Greeks, *repentance* toward God, and
faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. Is repentance necessary to salvation ?

A. Now God commandeth all men every where *Acts xvii. 30.*
to repent ; because he hath appointed a day *31.*
in the which he will judge the world in righte-
ousness.

Q. What does the apostle joyn with repent-
ing, to explain it.

A. That they should repent, and turn to *Acts xxvi. 20.*
God, and do works meet for repentance.

Q. Is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ
necessary to salvation ?

A. He that believeth on the Son, hath *John iii. 36.*
everlasting life ; and he that believeth not
the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of
God abideth on him.

Q. What are we to believe concerning him ?

A. That Jesus is the Christ — the Son *1 John v. 1, 5.*
of God.

Q. What advantage shall we have by believ-
ing in Christ ?

A. Thro' this man is preached unto you *Acts xiii. 38.*
the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that *39.*
believe are justified from all things, from
which ye could not be justified by the law of
Moses.

Q. What

Q. What other advantage have we by believing in him?

John i. 12.

A. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

Q. Will faith without works be of any advantage?

James ii. 17.

A. Faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.

Q. Are there any additional commandments peculiarly given by Christ?

John xiii. 34.

A. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Q. Has he added any other commandment of this sort?

Luke xvii. 3, 4.

A. Take heed to your selves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.

Q. Under what sanction does our Lord command this?

Matt. vi. 14, 15.

A. If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Q. Is there any farther commandment of this nature given by him?

Matt. v. 44.

A. I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Q. Is there any other new law added by Christ in the gospel?

A. Ve-

A. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatso-^{John xvi. 23,}
ever ye shall *ask the Father in my name*, he will ²⁴
give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing
in my name; *ask*, and ye shall receive, that
your joy may be full.

Q. *Has Christ appointed any new institution
in the form and method of religion?*

A. Go and teach all nations, baptizing ^{Matt. xxviii.}
them in the name of the Father, and of the ¹⁹
Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Q. *Is this baptism a means of salvation?*

A. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall ^{Mark xvi. 16.}
be saved.

Q. *Shall all then who are baptized be saved?*

A. Baptism doth now save us (not the put- ^{1 Pet. iii. 21.}
ting away of the filth of the flesh, but the
answer of a good conscience towards God) by
the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Q. *Is there any other institution of this kind in
the gospel?*

A. He took bread, and gave thanks, and ^{Luke xxii. 19,}
brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is ²⁰
my body which is given for you, this do in
remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup
after supper, saying, This cup is the new
testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Q. *What are these things the signs or means of?*

A. The cup of blessing which we bless, is ^{1 Cor. x. 16.}
it not the *communion of the blood of Christ*?
The bread which we break, is it not the
communion of the body of Christ?

Q. *What is it then we do by this ordinance?*

A. As often as ye eat this bread, and drink ^{1 Cor. xi. 26.}
this cup, ye do *shew the Lord's death* till he
come.

Q. *In what manner are we to attend on this
ordinance?*

1 Cor. v. 7, 8. *A.* Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with *old leaven*, neither with the *leaven of malice and wickedness*; but with the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.

Q. Is Christ to be worshiped?

Heb. i. 6.

A. When he again bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

Q. Upon what is this command founded?

Heb. i. 4.

A. He is made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Q. Upon what ground are men to give honour to Christ?

John v. 22,
23.

A. The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

Phil. ii. 8, 9,
10, 11.

He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Q. Does this honour terminate ultimately in Christ?

Philip. ii. 11.

A. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Q. Has Christ given us any rule for our prayers?

Luke xi. 2, 3,
4

And he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be

be done, as in heaven so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Q. How long shall Christ reign?

A. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 1 Cor. xvi. 25;

Q. What is the last enemy?

A. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 1 Cor. xv. 26;

Q. How shall that be destroyed?

A. The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. John v. 28, 26.

Q. What change shall the bodies of the saints then undergo?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Philip iii. 21.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual Body. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.

Q. What follows after this resurrection?

A. The dead were judged—according to their works. Rev. xx. 12.

Q. To what will Christ adjudge the righteous and the wicked?

A. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—And these

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these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.

Q. What effect should this consideration have upon us ?

2 Pet. iii. 14.

A. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Q. When shall this judgment be ?

Mark xiii. 32.

A. Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Q. What use are we to make of this uncertainty of the time ?

Mark xiii. 33.

A. Take ye heed, watch and pray ; for ye know not when the time is.

Luke xii. 40.

Be ye therefore ready also.

Q. What shall follow after this final judgment ?

1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. — And when all things shall be subdued unto him ; then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

The C R E E D.

I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth ; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, which was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell *, the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholick church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

* That is, His soul went into the place of separate souls.

F I N I S.



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